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THE HAPLESS VICTIM MOANED MOST PITIFULLY AS HE WRITHED IN HIS AGONIZED,
BUT VAIN ENDEAVORS TO ESCAPE THE TORTURER.

OR,

The Diabolical Three.

The Expose of the Baffling
Barret Mystery.

BY DAN DUNNING,
AUTHOR OF "QUIET JACK, THE SECRET SERVICE
SPY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A DEVILISH DEED.

"He will recover within an hour, Herman?"
"Yes, sir—positively."
"And this time will be sufficient?"
"It should be, Mr. Fulton—"
"But if not, we can try again, eh?"

The scene was an elegantly furnished room, on the second story of a house situated in the center of the fashionable quarter of New York.

This room was evidently a sleeping apartment, for it contained a bed, on which rested the figure of a man.

We say figure, because it might have been waxen, for all the indications of life that were apparent.

Yet, that it was a man, and alive, was proved by the conversation between the two men standing at the bedside.

The tall, well-formed, well-groomed first speaker—Mr. Fulton—was evidently the master, and the neatly attired, rather stout and short, Herman, the servant—or slave.

A sardonic laugh accompanied Mr. Fulton's last words, to which Herman responded with an obsequious smile as he whispered:

"But why take all this trouble, Mr. Fulton? One little drop, that I can easily get—"

"Would hang you!" calmly interrupted the other.

"Hang me?" exclaimed Herman, turning pale.

"Certainly. You don't suppose I would allow you to hang me? That little Parisian affair would discredit anything you might endeavor to tell, and hang you in the bargain.

"But, Herman, I've no wish to harm you, so don't make these foolish suggestions. Only blunders murder, where it can be avoided."

Smiling, (and thus showing his beautiful, even, white teeth,) while the ashen-faced Herman fairly shivered with terror, Mr. Fulton, after a short pause, continued:

"You know what to do, and when. I am going for the doctors."

As Mr. Fulton withdrew, the valet, (that was Herman's nominal position,) recovered his composure, and shaking his fist vengefully, muttered:

"Don't be so sure, my fine gentleman! One can talk as well as another."

Below, on the parlor floor, Mr. Fulton, looking very sad, and speaking very mournfully, was saying to a beautiful looking girl, and still handsome though aged matron:

"I fear—indeed I am certain—that poor Robert is about to have another attack."

"Do not go near the room;—it would only trouble you. I am going for the doctors."

The latter part of Mr. Fulton's speech was broken—as though he was overcome by emotion.

But, Mr. Fulton had overreached himself for once: he had forbidden something, and since the days of Eve forbiddenness has, to a certain extent, meant an inducement to transgression—and it did shortly after Mr. Fulton left his aunt and cousin.

Up-stairs, Herman sat, for a half hour after his master had left him, in deep thought.

It was about half-past two in the afternoon when Mr. Fulton left the sick-chamber.

At three Herman started up with the half-muttered exclamation:

"The stake's too big! I'll finish—as I've started."

Walking to the bedside of the unconscious man, the valet looked at him long and earnestly, but there was no mercy in his gaze.

"He's coming to," he muttered, and as he spoke, threw back the spread covering the unconscious man's feet, revealing the fact that they were strapped to the bed!

Having thrown back the spread, Herman went to a small cupboard, from which he took a small bottle of oil, and a long feather.

With these, he took a seat at the foot of the bed, and watched patiently until the sleeper emitted a low moan.

"Time to begin!" muttered Herman, dipping the feather into the oil, and, after another look at the now half-conscious man on the bed, began to draw it up and down the sole of the victim's foot!

The object was a simple one—merely to drive the man on the bed mad!

By simply touching the sole of your foot, under the instep, you will experience quite an electrical sensation; but, let another rub even a dry feather twice on it, and you will not undergo that sensation again—with your consent.

For a few minutes, the tickling sensation did not produce any effect on the victim, except to make him stir a little uneasily.

"A powerful constitution!" exclaimed the fiend at the foot of the bed, as the torture began to take effect.

Soon the hapless victim moaned most pitifully, as he writhed (as much as his bonds would permit), in his agonized, but vain endeavors to escape the torturer.

The latter calmly continued his diabolical

work, and, as with returning consciousness, the torture increased, shrieks, prayers and curses echoed through the house.

At times, it seemed as if, in his terrible agony, the miserable victim would burst his bonds—or a blood-vessel, but he was securely fastened just above the knee cap, and at the ankles.

Above the waist, the sufferer was strapped, as were his arms, but the bands that secured the knees were iron, and ran right through the thin mattress!

The legs, from the knees downward, being thus rendered immovable, the struggles of the victim did not disturb the devilish work of Herman, which was continued until the door-bell rung twice.

"Five minutes, eh?" muttered Herman.

Glancing first at the handsome clock on the mantel, and then taking a long look at the man, who was now a raving maniac, frothing at the mouth, he continued:

"He will do now. More might spoil it."

Having put away the instruments of torture, Herman returned to the foot of the bed. In his hand he carried some cotton batting, evidently intending to remove all traces of his nefarious work.

Seating himself in his former position, he drew down the bedclothes until only the feet were exposed, and wiped a little oil from one foot.

At that moment, hearing voices of persons approaching, the atrocious wretch sprang to his feet, dropping the cotton on the floor, just as his master, accompanied by three gentlemen, entered the sick chamber. They were the physicians—two above fifty years of age, and the third about thirty.

"I fear, professor," said Mr. Fulton, addressing one of the two older gentlemen, "I fear poor Robert is growing worse."

"Has he been very violent, Herman?"

"Terrible, sir, terrible!"

The young physician, meantime, had moved to the foot of the bed; his quick eye caught the glistening oil on the sole of the patient's foot, and stooping, he touched it with his forefinger, just as the professor, said:

"There is no doubt of it, my dear sir, Mr. Barret is mad!"

"Mad as a March hare!" assented the other old physician.

"Sweet oil! What does it mean?" asked the young physician.

He turned to Herman, as he spoke, and the other—his colleagues—looked at him in surprise, Mr. Fulton in alarm, and the valet in quite evident confusion.

Quickly recovering himself, Mr. Fulton, in a soothing tone, said:

"Don't be ashamed, Herman! You shall be amply compensated for your goodness to my poor cousin."

Turning to the physicians, the speaker explained.

"Herman was my cousin's valet, as you, perhaps, know, and became so attached to him that we thought it best to allow him to nurse Robert. Night and day he has attended to him, performing service that no one could be hired to do."

"One of Robert's fancies, Doctor Lewis, is that devils are tormenting—burning—his feet, and Herman rubs oil on them."

"You lie! Save me from those fiends! They are driving me mad!"

This shrieking appeal from the victim, confirmed Mr. Fulton's words, and Professors Tcherza and Sanders exchanged significant glances.

Mr. Fulton saw, and smiled, but looked apprehensively at Doctor Lewis, on catching the latter's eyes fixed upon him.

"You cannot keep him here!" declared Professor Sanders.

"No, no!" agreed Tcherza. "Not here, any longer."

"Well, what shall I do?" appealed Mr. Fulton.

"Send him to a private asylum," suggested Sanders, adding: "He can be better cared for there than here."

"Yes, and if necessary, this good fellow can have charge of him," added Tcherza.

"Then you are agreed that he is mad, gentlemen?"

Mr. Fulton shot a sharp glance at Doctor Lewis as he asked the question, and noted that the latter did not join in the—

"Oh, yes!" from Tcherza.

"Undoubtedly!" from Sanders.

The patient, himself, settled the question, however, at that moment, by emitting a succession of curses and shrieks, combined with accusations

of conspiring against him—in which the physicians were included.

"And you, Doctor Lewis?" asked Mr. Fulton, seeing the effect of this outburst.

With a reluctant sigh, the young, but already becoming famous physician, bowed assent to the verdict of his colleagues.

"Then you had better sign the necessary papers at once," enjoined Mr. Fulton, adding:

"Since it will be better for poor Robert, he should be removed as soon as possible. I will send for a lawyer immediately."

CHAPTER II.

AT GOODHEART'S ASYLUM.

"WELL, doctor, how is the patient to-day?"

"Doing nicely, Mr. Fulton. After the first day we had no trouble whatever."

"Is he sane? Has he full possession of his senses?"

"Well, yes, but he is still very nervous, and a few days' rest will do him no harm."

The "doctor" was Morris Goodheart, a patriarchal looking Hebrew, and the scene the office of his private lunatic asylum, just outside the city limits; the time one week after Robert Barret (who was the patient referred to) had been declared insane.

The visitor appeared pleased to hear the doctor's favorable report, and said so, adding:

"You have worked wonders, doctor."

The aged physician stroked his long white beard for a few moments, evidently thinking of something other than his visitor's laudatory remarks, and then asked:

"Has Mr. Barret recently received any sudden shock—such as might temporarily deprive him of his senses?"

"No, not that I know of," replied Fulton.

"And you would be likely to know?"

"I would be very likely to know."

"Strange, very strange. I have known of but one—"

The aged physician was thinking aloud, but here his voice sunk, and the balance remained unuttered, although, judging from the eager expression of his face, Mr. Fulton would have given quite a little to hear that balance.

An impatient movement of his visitor, aroused the doctor from his thoughts, and, looking up, he said:

"Except that he is very nervous—suffering from some horrible fear—Mr. Barret is all right."

"After he recovered from the opiate, which I gave him on the day he arrived here, there has been no trouble with him, and he might, with perfect safety, be discharged at once."

"I would, however, recommend his remaining here another week, and when he is discharged, that he should have plenty of rest and quietness—no business."

Mr. Fulton exhibited great satisfaction on hearing this.

"Your directions and suggestions shall be followed to the letter!" he declared.

"Suppose we go see Mr. Barret? He is out on the grounds," suggested the doctor, and the visitor assenting, they left the office, and entering the small park, (in the center of which the asylum stood,) met Robert Barret just about coming in at the rear door.

The latter, (more as if startled, than for any other reason,) shrunk back on seeing Fulton, but the latter sprang forward, exclaiming:

"Robert, my dear fellow, I'm delighted! I could hardly believe the good news the doctor had for me this morning!"

"Thank you," quietly returned the patient, as if repenting his coolness:

"Of course, I know you are glad, George."

"Glad!" echoed the other, reproachfully, "why, I've been almost crazy myself since you've been here!"

"And, now, the doctor nearly drives me crazy" (with a smile) "by telling me, this morning, that you are yourself again, and only need rest and quiet for—how long, doctor?"

"Oh, a little while—say a month," replied the physician, adding:

"But the longer the better."

"Then I may resume control at once!" exclaimed the patient, and there was a ring of exultation in his voice.

"Who has the management, now?" he continued, addressing Fulton.

"I have—as representing your holdings, of course, "so you can follow Doctor Goodheart's advice, and enjoy a long rest," replied Fulton, the frown which had gathered a minute before, disappearing from his usually calm countenance.

"No, no! I must be the head," promptly decided Barret, but without any trace of excitement.

Fulton's face darkened, as he answered, with ominous calmness:

"Very well. Everything is running smoothly, so there is nothing to trouble yourself about for the present."

"And, now, no more business, gentlemen, or I will not invite you to luncheon," threatened the doctor.

"Very well, we'll stop at once, rather than lose that," laughed Barret.

Fulton looked at him in surprise.

"He certainly is himself," he muttered.

"My aunt and Eunice?" asked Barret.

"Are both well, and will be rejoiced to hear of your speedy recovery," replied Fulton.

In honor of the patient's recovery, or the visitor, or both, the luncheon was quite an elaborate affair, and before it was over, the doctor had agreed that Robert Barret might be discharged that week.

"Very well," said Fulton, "sign a certificate, and I will get the necessary papers."

The certificate was signed and Mr. Fulton departed—but not for home. His carriage was driven further on, fully five miles, stopping at "Doctor Salter's Sanitarium," where it remained an hour before Mr. Fulton re-entered it, and gave the order to drive home.

CHAPTER III.

A TREACHEROUS TRIP.

ABOUT dusk, on the evening of the second day following Fulton's visit, Robert Barret was sitting in the office of the asylum, with the doctor, when closed carriage whirled up to the gate.

"Late visitors," remarked Barret, looking up from the paper he was reading.

"Hello! It's Fulton!" he exclaimed a moment later, as that gentleman leaped out of the carriage, and hurried toward the office.

"Couldn't get here any earlier," explained the visitor, skaking Barret's hand with his right hand, while with his left, he extended a legal looking document to the doctor.

"What's this?" demanded the latter, in surprise.

"An order for Mr. Barret's discharge."

"You didn't delay very long," observed the doctor, looking sharply at Fulton, after examining the order.

"No. The sooner he's out, the quicker that month's idleness will be over, and then he can return to business," replied Fulton.

"Right you are, George," laughingly exclaimed Barret, who, like all men, rejoiced to be relieved of even the suspicion of restraint.

"It's getting late, and the drive is long and cold—stay to-night, Mr. Barret," urged the doctor.

He had a queer, undefinable, almost suspicious feeling regarding this hastily-procured discharge, and disliked to allow Barret to take this night-ride.

"Nonsense!" angrily exclaimed Fulton, who looked very much excited, "nonsense! Do you think a man who would lie an hour in a snow-bank for the sake of shooting a duck, cares about a little cold weather?"

"No use, doctor, I am going," smilingly declared Barret.

"Very well, willful man—you know."

"But, since you *will* go, don't delay."

There was very little delay. Fulton assisted in packing the baggage of his friend and patron, and bidding the good old doctor adieu, they entered the carriage.

"Hello! Who the deuce is this?"

It was Barret who spoke, and his words were caused by the presence of a short, thick-set, powerfully-built man, sitting in one corner of the carriage—that nearest the open door, which prevented his being seen until Barret was seated.

"Oh, he's a deputy sheriff!" explained Fulton, with a nervous laugh, adding:

"We are not entirely through with the law, yet, and he must remain with us to-night."

It was the Barret carriage, and the owner quietly, but very firmly said:

"He can ride with the coachman."

It was bitter cold, but at a sign from Fulton, the "deputy sheriff"—the carriage being stopped—left his seat, and ascended to the box, muttering something, which Barret did not catch, but which was:

"You'll pay for this, pretty dear, too, my fine gentleman!"

After this, Fulton kept up a constant fire of remarks and questions, so engaging his unsuspecting companion's attention, that the latter did not perceive that the carriage was proceeding out of, instead of into, the city.

They had been riding about twenty minutes, and were rapidly nearing their destination, when Barret suddenly remarked:

"By Jove, I'm getting sleepy! What's the matter with me?"

"Why not take a nap—it will do you good," suggested his friend.

"Believe I will," sleepily returned the victim, as his head fell back against the cushions.

Fulton gazed at him with an ironical smile, and remarked:

"That last glass of wine was too much—just one too much for you, my dear Robert. I am very much afraid that you will *not* resume the management next month—nor next year—nor ever!"

The last words were uttered with a fierce energy, that seemed to convey their terrible meaning to the brain of the victim, who groaned and muttered:

"Spare me! Save me from those devils!"

Fulton was startled for a moment, but recovering himself, muttered:

"Pshaw! I must be getting nervous, myself. Salter was mistaken about the power of the drug, though. I was afraid it wouldn't act in time."

And then recurring to Barret's appeal:

"No, no, Robert! You've had your last chance, but you *would* resume the management!"

"Now, you *must* go mad!"

As the fiend finished, the carriage stopped. They were in front of "Doctor Salter's Sanitarium," and four men stepped to the door with a stretcher.

Evidently everything was in readiness for the reception of Robert Barret.

As the unconscious victim was lifted from the carriage he groaned.

"Shut up, curse you!" ordered the "deputy sheriff," striking him a savage blow in the face.

That was Doctor Salter's "method"—or rather one of his "methods."

CHAPTER IV.

AT SALTER'S SANITARIUM.

As Robert Barret, his face bleeding from the brutal blow struck by the "deputy sheriff," was carried into "Doctor Salter's Sanitarium," a man, somewhat resembling him, was led out and placed in the carriage.

Accompanying this man was Herman, Mr. Barret's former valet, and as soon as they were in the carriage, it was driven to the nearest railroad depot, where both boarded the train.

Then Mr. Fulton gave the order to drive home.

Robert Barret, meantime, had been carried into the "Sanitarium," and thrown into a padded cell!

It was daylight when he returned to consciousness, and, still under the influence of the drug, the victim could not realize where he was, or what had happened.

In one respect Fulton had overreached himself—or rather, his tool had, for him.

Had the victim returned to consciousness in the full possession of his senses, able to realize that he was now confined in a padded cell as a violent maniac, it is more than likely that he would have become one.

But the full force of his situation did not strike Barret for some time.

Little by little he pieced out what had happened from the time of Fulton's arrival at the well-named Dr. Goodheart's Asylum, until he grew drowsy in the carriage.

Then, as with a glance at the grated door, he realized the treachery of the man he had befriended, raised from a mere clerk to a man of standing and influence in the commercial and social world, his heart sunk.

"This man must be playing for tremendously high stakes. He will, therefore, hesitate at nothing!"

Such was the conclusion that forced itself upon the unhappy prisoner, as he lay upon the floor of his padded cell, doomed to a living death!

Cries, shrieks, groans, curses, yells of every description, soon began to echo throughout the "Sanitarium"—started by one unfortunate, and taken up by the others.

Barret's cell was in an isolated quarter of the den, where none but the violent and most noisy lunatics were confined, and soon the din was maddening.

But Robert Barret, free for nearly two weeks from the infernal tortures of Herman, and rested and strengthened by the care of Dr. Goodheart, was more like his old self than he had been for a long time.

A man of iron constitution, great will power, and strong nerve, originally, he still retained enough of these necessary qualities, he believed, to thwart the treacherous villain who was plotting against him.

The thought of his danger, and Fulton's treachery, now only served to clear a brain that a month previous would have succumbed to the blow.

In a few minutes he heard the keeper coming, and with a blow of the fist here, a crack of the cane there, the cries began to cease.

Soon they reached Barret's cell, and paused in front of the grated door.

"He's takin' a long time t' come to," remarked one.

"Yes, but when he does—" replied the other, and the blank was so expressive, that it was only by a tremendous effort the listener repressed a shudder.

"Why, I thought he was some big gun—comin' here in such a fancy rig. Who is he, anyhow?"

"Don't you mind who he is! Who was it had this coop before him?"

"Hanged if I know, except that he was a simple, harmless chap, who had no one belongin' to him. Peter Simple, we called him."

"Well, this feller's Peter Simple from this out—understand?"

"Of course I do. When the commissioners, or examiners, or whatever ye call 'em, come around, he's t' be Peter Simple—and he looks like him, too!"

"Right! And now about treatment."

"You saw me hit him?"

"I did."

"Well, Andy, that's the course of treatment, and the quicker ye begin it, the better the boss'll like ye!"

"He'll be ugly as soon as he wakes up 'n' finds out how he's been fooled, so you'll have a good chance to begin."

Andy made no response, and the other continued:

"You heard what I said?"

"Of course I did!" testily returned Andy, adding:

"Come on, an' stop these divils! They're enough t' drive a sane man mad!"

As they moved away from the door, Barret managed to get a glimpse of this precious pair, and saw that one was the "deputy sheriff."

This was sufficient to confirm what he had already concluded—that Fulton was a most diabolical scoundrel!

And the course of treatment!

The "deputy sheriff's" words had revealed to Barret the cause of the soreness and swelling on one side of his face; also, that he was to be beaten, kicked and otherwise maltreated at every opportunity—and opportunities are never lacking, when one wishes to find fault.

Still he was free from the horrible torture inflicted by Herman, and lying quietly on his back, studied the situation.

The purpose of the conspirators was, quite evidently, to *drive him mad*, and that he resolved to thwart by immediately appearing to be so.

"I will feign to be what they wish to make me—a gibbering idiot!" decided Barret.

Just as he came to this decision, the cries and shrieks, (mingled with the sounds of blows,) became terrific; but they soon ceased, and shortly after the "deputy sheriff" passed, muttering curses at every step.

Soon after, Barret heard the heavy footsteps of "Andy" as he approached—notwithstanding the latter's rubber-soled felt shoes—and, within a few seconds, the giant keeper stood before his door.

CHAPTER V.

FEIGNING INSANITY.

THE big keeper was talking to himself when he stopped before Barret's cell door.

From his mutterings, the prisoner gathered that Andy had had a tussle with one of the noisy lunatics, and had been hurt.

"How well it wasn't Lamb—the 'deputy sheriff'—that was hurt," muttered Andy.

"Lamb, indeed!" he continued. "Wolf 'u'd be a fitter name for him, an' my wrist 'd be all right now, if it wasn't for his beautiful temper."

"God help this poor divil when he begins on him!"

Metaphorically and literally, the words, and the tone in which they were uttered, opened the listener's eyes.

"This man is partly human, at all events," thought Barret. "I'll try him!"

A sly glance revealed that the keeper was ruefully examining his wrist, and seeing what was wrong, the prisoner arose, saying:

"Put in your hand and stand close to the door. I'll fix that wrist for you."

Although surprised by the sudden awakening, and the quiet, sensible tone and demeanor of Barret, the keeper obeyed without hesitation.

"Your wrist is out of joint—a sudden pull will, probably, snap it back. Steady, now—so!"

Andy felt a little twinge of pain as, with the last word, Barret jerked him against the grated door. Then his hand was released—and it was all right.

"Are you a doctor?" he asked, after looking at his wrist.

"No, but I've had plenty of experience at that sort of work, through football and boxing."

Had he tried, Barret could not have made a more interesting statement—to Andy.

The big keeper was an ardent admirer of the manly art, but his knowledge of it was confined, almost altogether, to what was to be gathered from "Somebody's Art of Self Defense," and to newspaper accounts of meetings between gladiators of the fistic arena.

He had a set of gloves, but was too big and powerful, to be able to induce the other keepers and attendants to practice with him, so, Andy was compelled to be content with theory—until now.

"Kin you box?" he eagerly inquired.

"A little," replied Barret.

"Well, I'll come up after breakfast—"

Andy stopped short, looking rather vexed, and asked:

"You were awake all the time—just shammin'?"

"I was," quietly admitted Barret.

"Well, ye heard the orders, of course, and I see what the game is."

"You're no more crazy than I am!"

"You look pretty level-headed," returned Barret.

"Yes, but don't ye see what they're up to? You're to be *driven* mad!"

"Oh, it isn't such a hard job as you may think," he continued, as Barret shook his head doubtfully. "Clubs, an' cold water droppin' for hours on yer bare-shaved skull, will *work wonders* with the hardest head!"

"But I am mad already—at least, I shall pretend to be," rejoined Barret.

"No, no; that'd be too quick. Whoever put ye here, knows better than that, an' these devils'd be suspicious."

Andy paused, and, after thoughtfully regarding the patient for a few moments, continued:

"D'ye know who put ye here? Have ye any sure friends, or money, if ye got out?"

"Both friends and money," replied Barret, ignoring the first question, and almost regretting that he had revealed his plan of feigning madness.

The big keeper, however, meant him no harm, and hurried away, saying:

"I must be off! There's no time to talk, now, but I'll come up to-night."

"Breakfast will soon come along. Don't stir for it—act as if ye were stupid from the drug. I'll report that ye are, and *mebbe* they won't bother ye t'-day."

"I'll bring ye a bite, after a while."

These words both cheered and depressed Barret. That he had a friend in Andy he felt pretty certain, and that was comforting; but "*mebbe* they won't bother ye t'-day" brought to mind "clubs an' cold water," and he shuddered at the thought.

Soon the clatter of pans and clanging of doors warned the prisoner that breakfast was being served to the violent cases, and that observant eyes soon would be upon him.

In a few minutes, two men bearing a large wooden tray covered with tin pans and cups, stopped before Barret's door for a moment, but after one glance at the inmate, (sitting on the floor with his back to the wall, staring stupidly at the ceiling,) passed on.

Coming back, he was in the same position, and after another momentary stop to observe him, they disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRAUD DETECTED.

AFTER an hour's absence, Andy made good his promise to return, appearing before Barret's cell, carrying a small parcel, the contents of which proved to be sandwiches—chicken!

"Here, take these," said the big fellow, and as the patient obeyed, drew a small bottle from his pocket.

"That's good claret," he continued, putting the bottle between the bars. "You go ahead 'n' eat—I'll watch."

"Where the deuce did you get—" began the patient, but Andy stopped him.

"You go ahead 'n' eat—this ain't no time for talk!" remonstrated the good-natured, if ungrammatical keeper.

Barret obeyed, and while he was eating, Andy continued:

"I stand in with the cook, 'n' often used to bring the poor chap, whose place and name you've taken, little outside bits, so you keep up the starvation dodge."

"Eat a little once a day, or every other day, an' play bein' very weak 'n' silly."

The prisoner nodded, and kept on industriously demolishing the sandwiches, while Andy watched in silence, until the last bit and drop were gone.

Then he said:

"I wouldn't get nervous over it—but the head devil is comin' t' see ye in a little while, 'n' unless ye kin fool him—an' that's a tough job—you're t' get a dose o' the shower this morning!"

"When ye get the order t' strip, don't make no fuss—that's what they want, for then, they'll have an excuse for the clubs."

"I hope they won't order me t' be there, for if there's trouble, they'll expect me t' jump in—and—I—won't! That's flat!"

The danger he was in appeared to act as a nerve-restorer on Robert Barret.

"How many, generally, are present at this devilish work?" he said.

"The boss, Lamb, and maybe one more."

"I'm here only a few months, but I've got it from the others. They've got me here, just because I'm bigger 'n' stronger than the average, so I suppose I'd be the third."

"Well, you are bigger, and look stronger, than the average man, but, if you are the third, keep out of my reach, or down ye'll go!"

Barret smiled wickedly as he uttered this warning, causing Andy to stare at him in admiring surprise.

"Well, you have got nerve!" exclaimed the big keeper, adding:

"But, look here! One dose o' the shower won't kill ye, an' it won't drive ye crazy—though it's powerful weakenin'—an' the easy way's the best, so if they don't *try* t' rile ye, go easy, 'n' let on that the effect is terrible. Play weak, 'n' faint."

"Hello! He's comin', already! So sit down, 'n' shiver 'n' shake as if ye were afraid t' stir. I'll swear I've been lickin' ye. Don't mind what I say!"

At the moment he interrupted himself, Andy had discovered Dr. Salter stealthily approaching, but, when the latter came within earshot, he found that the big keeper was cursing and abusing Barret.

So stealthily had the rascally doctor come, that the start with which the keeper greeted his first words, was more than half genuine.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Eh! Oh, I didn't notice ye comin'."

"There's no trouble of any account, doctor. I've just been givin' him a few thumps, t' kind o' break him. Mr. Lamb said he was an ugly brute, but he's tame enough, now."

Doctor Salter smiled, (showing his teeth in an unpleasant fashion,) and approaching the door, looked sharply at the cowering wretch on the floor; then, turning to Andy, asked:

"How was he when he came to?"

"Shaky first, then ugly until I stepped in."

Salter turned to Barret once more, evidently somewhat puzzled, and after another long and sea ching look, said:

"Be very careful in dealing with this man, Andy. He's dangerous—treacherous—and you have begun the right way. Keep him in fear of you, and don't hesitate about braining him, if he shows signs of fight!"

"There ain't much fight in him, now," remarked Andy.

"No. Keep him so."

"Well, you're out of it this time," observed the big keeper, as the doctor left the corridor.

So, the game was played—Andy pretending to be abusing Barret, and the latter feigning idiocy.

There were certainly some odd thumping-scenes in Barret's cell—the big keeper making an excuse of thumping the patient to take lessons in boxing!

The gloves were kept in Barret's cell, Andy pointing out a secret receptacle in the wall, dug by a former occupant.

As may be imagined, becoming so friendly with the keeper, Barret endeavored to communicate with the outside world, but in vain—

Andy would neither carry, nor send, a message of any kind.

"No, sir, I'm sorry, but I can't do it," he said, when Barret mentioned the subject.

"When I was hired, I swore never to take or send any kind of a message further than the office, and, right or wrong, I've always kept my word."

"But," he added, fiercely, "I *didn't* swear I'd not break their skulls, and if they lay a finger on ye, Mr. Barret, I'll spread them out like sheep!"

"And, I know how t' do it, now—thanks t' you."

With that, and Andy's consolatory assertion, that some of his friends would look him up, Barret was compelled to be satisfied, and, so, the days and nights passed, until Lamb, without any apparent reason, grew suspicious of the night visits, and watched one performance with the gloves from the opposite corridor.

Next morning the "deputy sheriff" appeared at Barret's door, and, with a sarcastic smile, said:

"Well, you *did* fool the old man, didn't ye? But, yer uncle got onto ye last night, and yer pupil's gone this morning!"

"No more use for the gloves, Mister B., so we'll take them while you're takin' a bath!"

"And the best of the joke is, your pupil will consider the oath he took when he came here, just as binding as if he was still with us!"

"Oh, how you will get it for losing us such a good man!"

That was in the seventh month of Robert Barret's lunacy.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE MONTHS AFTER.

It is evening of the first day of spring, and a fire in the grate of the rear parlor of the old-fashioned mansion of the Barret family, made it only comfortable for the occupants—a lady and a gentleman.

The lady—a young and strikingly beautiful brunette, is saying:

"Heed my warning, George, or you will soon regret it!"

"Don't worry so, my dear girl. Everything is moving smoothly," responds the tall, elegant gentleman, leaning against the mantel.

The carelessly soothing tone irritates the young lady.

"Yes! And, so, everything moves smoothly, until the match is touched to the fuse!"

"You are standing over a mine, George; beware of the match!"

"But, my dear girl, what harm can she do? She knows nothing!" protests the gentleman, in a weary tone, that indicates to his companion how tired of the topic he is, and she gives it up with:

"Very well, but I hope you will not rue your carelessness—she is acting very strangely."

"Thank goodness!" ejaculated the gentleman, under his breath, while the lady continued:

"And, now, tell me, George, by what lucky chance did you obtain such wonderful influence over Robert Barret?"

"Luck had nothing to do with it," calmly returned the other, "it was all planned out."

"To begin with, I studied the man's character, found out his weak points—and played upon them, until, from being a mere clerk, I became an indispensable companion, as well as assistant."

"I soon was thoroughly acquainted with his private affairs, and with every detail of the business, until I knew more about his matters than he did himself—although he was very shrewd in all his business."

The gentleman appeared to enjoy his story, and pausing, lighted a cigar (as though accustomed to smoke in the presence of his companion), after which, he continued:

"As we grew more intimate, we became somewhat convivial in our habits (that is to say, he did, while I pretended to), and soon, I had almost full charge of everything."

"Almost, however, was not enough—I must have all, so I had to save his life!"

"Had to save his life!" echoed the young lady, for the first time interrupting this strange story.

"Yes, and I flatter myself that was a stroke of genius," replied her companion complacently, as he paused to knock the ash off his cigar.

"We had been drinking one afternoon, and I suggested a ride—to work off the effects."

"For a joke, (and a five-dollar bill,) the groom gave him an ugly, runaway, beast. He was a fine horseman—sober—but, when I *accidentally* struck his horse—I was a little behind—the beast cut up terribly, and would probably have killed him, had I not been present."

saw mounted policemen, and others, coming, and fearing they would arrive *too soon*, risked a broken skull, and managed to get a scalp wound—enough to draw blood. Then I fell. "He was terribly frightened about me, ordered a carriage and would have driven me to the nearest doctor's, but I—for very good reasons—insisted on my own physician."

"Once in the carriage, I became worse, complaining of intense pain in my side, and head, and was fairly carried into my room."

"We had called for my physician on the way home, and, on making an examination, he found *several ribs broken*, as well as a *dangerous wound in the head*!"

"George was full of gratitude and anxiety, and the papers made me a hero, but even that failed to fetch the mark. He was with me day and night until I was *out of danger*, and then had me removed to this house, where he declared I should stay as long as I lived; put twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of stock in my name—but, still retained the management."

The speaker stopped, and puffed leisurely at his cigar, as though the story were ended.

"Well, what then?" asked the lady.

"Oh, then, he *went mad*," carelessly replied the story-teller, adding:

"And, of course, having charge of his estate, which gave me the controlling votes, *I am now in his place*."

Some one was now heard opening the hall door, and the young lady hastily left the room, just in time to avoid two ladies, who entered the front parlor.

"What, alone, Mr. Fulton?" asked the elder of the new-comers, a handsome matron of fifty or thereabouts.

"Alone, as you see, Mrs. Barret," responded the gentleman.

"Too bad—and very unfeeling of Emily," jestingly observed Mrs. Barret.

"I fear the Emilys do not favor me, but I trust this Emily enjoyed the concert?"

As Mr. Fulton says this, he turns to the younger lady, who has been standing a little aside, drawing off her gloves.

"This Emily," as he designates her, but for the blue eyes and golden hair she possesses, could not be distinguished from the young lady who quitted the room a few minutes before.

Quite different to the other, this Emily regards Mr. Fulton very coolly, and answers very coldly that the concert was "fairly good,"—disregarding the question of her enjoyment of it.

"And Doctor Lewis?" questions the gentleman, looking a little malicious.

"Emily" regards him with a steady, cold, questioning stare. She can be as freezing as the "other Emily" is fiery, and the usually unruffled Mr. Fulton grows confused.

"I mean—that is, I presume that Doctor Lewis enjoyed it?" he explains.

"Well, really, that is a strange question to ask me! How should I know?"

Mr. Fulton withers under the freezing scorn of the reply, but Mrs. Barret mercifully interposes:

"What are you 'fencing' about? The concert was really good, and, of course, Doctor Lewis enjoyed it."

This does not end the warfare, however, in the rear parlor, for when Mrs. Barret and her daughter retire, (which they do in a few minutes,) the other "Emily" enters, her black eyes flashing fire, her cheeks burning with indignant rage.

"What is the meaning of all this bending and cringing?" she angrily demands.

There is a touch of jealousy in her voice, but he does not—or pretends not to—notice it.

With a significant glance at the window, through which the angry girl had entered from the piazza, Mr. Fulton replies:

"We must sometimes stoop—very low—to conquer."

"Well, I have the right to know!" defiantly answers Emily, adding, as she turned to leave the room:

"Remember what I said about the mine, George, and beware of the match! If you do not, you will find in that girl, cold as she looks, your match!"

"I wish to Heaven she would!" exclaims the gentleman, when his companion has gone, and as he lights a fresh cigar, adds:

"Or, at least show some indication of one day becoming so."

"Emily says: 'beware of the match,' but Eunice appears to be entirely too wary of the match to please me."

"If she would only give the slightest hope, how quick I would decide upon what to do; but—Well, all the worse for her, if she refuses."

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

ON retiring to their rooms, Mrs. Barret and Eunice had a long chat, as was customary, in the course of which each had much to say to the other, regarding the man below.

Mrs. Barret, who was the widowed sister-in-law of the millionaire owner of the house, opened the subject with:

"Eunice, why do you treat Mr. Fulton so coldly, almost contemptuously?"

"Mother, I do not like him."

"But, you might be, at least, courteous to one who has done so much for your unfortunate uncle," expostulates Mrs. Barret.

"Too much, I fear," replies Eunice.

"What do you mean? I am sure no one could have done more. He was unremitting in his attentions, and kindness and consideration personified, during the time poor Robert was here."

"Are you sure he was kind to Uncle Robert?" asks Eunice, without looking up, her chin resting in her palm, her eyes staring straight ahead.

"Why, Eunice, what has happened to you? Such cruel suspicions are utterly unlike you! What do you mean?"

"I hardly know, mother," she replies, with a weary sigh, "but, something tells me that Uncle Robert has not been fairly dealt with."

"Is it not strange that, after his release from the asylum, he should immediately start West without even calling here?"

"But, my dear, that was explained by Mr. Fulton, and it is scarcely just to expect him, burdened, as he now is, with all of Robert's affairs, to keep a bulletin posted, as it were, stating your uncle's condition, and whereabouts."

"You are neither courteous nor just, Eunice!" finishes Mrs. Barret, warm with indignation.

"Well, perhaps, I wrong him, and I will endeavor to avoid another lecture, but, mother, I am often strongly tempted to test the truth of some of these things."

And, kissing her mother good-night, Eunice passed into her own room.

Next the rooms of Mrs. Barret and her daughter, and separated from the former by only a thin door—originally intended for temporary use—was that of Emily Morgan, whose history will develop later.

Every word of the conversation regarding Fulton, had been heard by Emily, who immediately on entering her room, had gone to the key-hole to listen, for she was beginning to grow jealous.

When the conversation was ended, she laughed softly, though by no means gleefully, for her thoughts were not pleasing.

"Now, if he wishes to play me false," she soliloquized, "I shall be revenged by the one who, I suspect, is beginning to displace me."

"But she must be watched, for, if she should yield to that temptation she speaks of, all is lost, and, until he proves himself one way or the other, I must look after her."

"It will not take long to determine whether he is true or false—now that she promises to treat him with common decency—and if there is a declaration of love, I will take care to be on hand at the finish."

Thus the two girls (so strangely alike in appearance, and opposite in nature), retired full of doubt regarding the same man.

Next day Fulton was agreeably surprised to find himself treated courteously, even kindly, by Eunice Barret.

At first he was somewhat suspicious of this sudden change, but as it continued he began to grow hopeful that her previous coldness was only assumed, and finally, at the end of a month, having paid Eunice considerable attention, without being repulsed, resolved to venture on a declaration of *his love* (?).

Keen, villainously keen, as he was in all other matters, woman was a mystery to George Fulton—as she is to most men—and willing to be deceived by Eunice's enforced kindness, he would not see that it barely concealed an intense, and constantly increasing, dislike.

Emily, however (who saw all that was going on), easily penetrated the thin veil of courtesy, and, concealing her jealous rage, awaited the hour of her revenge—now, plainly, close at hand.

The declaration, however, was unexpectedly deferred, by a sudden business call—of such importance that Mr. Fulton jumped into a cab, drove to the depot, and went westward by special train, without notice to any one until he was on the road.

A month elapsed before he returned—full of exultation over the successful accomplishment of his business, and of hope that Cupid would not prove less propitious than Mercury—for his

business had involved hundreds of hitherto solid concerns in difficulties, from which but few recovered.

His return was as unexpected as his departure, and he was delighted to learn, on his arrival home, that Emily had an engagement which would compel her to be out during the early part of the night.

"Now is my time," he thought, on learning this. "Such another opportunity will not present itself for some time," and he determined to "have it out" (as he expressed it) with Eunice that night.

When Emily was going out Fulton accompanied her to the door, and kissing her tenderly, murmured:

"When you return the others will have retired; then we will have an opportunity to talk."

Emily looked up with a sweet smile, nodded intelligently, and departed—re-entering by way of the basement—while he, poor, mere, dull man, returned to the parlor, his countenance expressing the satisfaction he felt at thus being freed of her watchful eye.

As if to favor his design, Mrs. Barret now complained of headache, and retired to her room, leaving Eunice and Fulton together.

"Now or never!" thought the now sanguine suitor, and plunging headlong into the subject, began:

"Miss Barret—Eunice—you must have perceived my love for you—"

He never got any further.

Turning on him with the air and tone of a tragedy queen, Eunice uttered just one word:

"Sir?"

But, there was a whole font of indignant, contemptuous interrogation points in that monosyllable, and Mr. Fulton shrunk back, while Eunice swept out of the room.

She had hardly gone when the curtains of one of the rear parlor windows were parted, and to his utter confusion, and not a little to his consternation, Emily stepped into the room!

CHAPTER IX.

EXPLANATION—RECONCILIATION.

THERE was an ugly smile on Emily's face as she stepped into the room, that was almost as expressive as Eunice's "Sir!"

She did not speak, but her eyes were full of jealous rage and fury over his unfaithfulness—as it proved to be.

He could not deny the fact, but he *might* explain the act.

"I—ah— Why, Emily, I thought that—"

"That I was gone to the Vastors!"

"No, George, dear, as you see, I did not. I thought it would be better fun to wait, and see you crushed—and, dear me! weren't you?"

George looked anything but happy on hearing this, which was followed by a burst of sardonic laughter.

"And so you thought I was blind to all that was going on, George?" she continued.

"Why, my dear, dearly beloved, I saw it all from the beginning. I—"

"But you did not understand it all—or any part of it—at any time!" interrupted Fulton.

He was beginning to fear Emily—if not herself, certainly what she knew, and determined to make a desperate effort to regain her confidence.

"You saw it all," he continued, speaking rapidly, "but you did not speak—did not ask what it meant, and I, like a fool, supposed it was unnecessary to explain anything to you!"

"Now, I shall do so—whether you care or not!"

"Eunice Barret, through Robert, owns a large interest in the road—but she has not the faintest idea of how large it is."

"Now there will be a combination formed to oust me, at the annual meeting, but, as her accepted suitor, I would be sure of controlling her interest—otherwise it might be used against me, and her votes, (which Robert did not even ask the privilege of using,) give the balance of power. Do you understand, now, why I wished—why Eunice Barret is so attractive?"

As he continued, Fulton saw he was gaining ground, and he finished almost fiercely.

Emily knew nothing of business matters, and she was willing—more than willing, anxious, to be convinced that she was mistaken—that Fulton was merely pretending love for Eunice.

"Well, you certainly looked the lover," she said, very meekly, and then warming up, continued:

"And, now, allow me to tell you something of interest to yourself."

"I warned you that you were standing over a mine, and that that girl would prove your

match. Well, she has been very near it—and may do so, yet!

"Two months ago, I overheard her tell her mother that she was strangely tempted to investigate *this matter*—and you know what that would mean, if sharp men were put on your trail.

"Well, since then, notwithstanding what I saw, I have had her every movement watched, to see that she did not yield to the temptation, without our knowing it.

"Now, it is for you to say what shall be done."

Fulton seemed to be strongly moved by this watchfulness in his behalf, and said:

"Emily, you should know better than judge by appearances, but, henceforth, you shall not have even the ghost of a chance to complain.

"You are to be my wife, and shall be—but, Emily, it must be as Eunice Barret!

"As you know, it was your resemblance to her—aside from your beauty—that first attracted my attention, and now the time is fast approaching when that resemblance must be made use of!

"The old lady can be got out of the way, by an appeal from Barret (?) to join him—without the daughter.

"At the first sign of trouble from her, she can be easily disposed of. You will disappear—return home—and reappear as Eunice Barret!"

"But how can I do that? She is a blonde, while I am a brunette."

"Go immediately to one of those women who make a business of changing hair and complexions, engage one of their people to accompany you, and transform you from brunette to blonde.

"Some large hotel in the city will be the best place to go to—I can then reach you easily and quickly—and you must be ready, at an hour's notice, to assume the character of Eunice Barret.

"The letter that calls you back will give full instructions as to how you are to act."

Next day, Emily declared her intention of returning home—to visit her father, and from that hour, Eunice Barret's every movement was watched.

That was just five and one-half months after Robert Barret's physicians decided that he was a lunatic.

CHAPTER X.

SIX MONTHS AFTER.

A SCORCHING hot day in July; an office on the top floor of a high building in Broadway; a roughly-dressed, innocent-looking, but keen-eyed man of about forty-five, and an elegantly-attired, beautiful blonde of nineteen, or thereabouts—and you have the scene.

"Is Mr. Austin in?"

The young lady is asking for the junior member of the firm whose name adorns the door:

"McVEIGH & AUSTIN."

(Nothing more appears on the sign, nor does the interior of the office give any indication of the character of the business carried on by the firm.)

"He is not, ma'am," promptly replies the rough-looking old fellow.

The young lady looks distressed, and hesitatingly asks if Mr. McVeigh is in.

"Faith, he is, ma'am," is the rich brogue reply.

"Do you think I could see him?"

This timidly-asked question caused the man to grin, as he replied:

"Indade, ye kin, ma'am, for yer eyes are fine, an' Mac sthands forninst thim."

The visitor shrunk back in evident confusion, and apparent or real awe.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Hamilton said you looked like a—"

Becoming even more confused, the young lady stopped short; but Mac filled up the blank with:

"Like a hod-carrier. Yis, ma'am, I'm the wan ye'r' afther."

"But I thought hod-carriers wore white—"

"Yis, ma'am, so the do, but these 'r' me Sunday clothes."

"Ye see, if I wore me phite pants, I'd have t' wear me hod, too, an' that 'd niver do, for instance: runnin' down a dark alley afther a Ditchman!

"An', now, ma'am, phat kin I do fer ye?"

"Don't be afear'd," he continued, as the visitor stood hesitating. "I'm th' roight man—ye kin tell that be me brogues!"

As Mac well knew, it was not doubt of his identity that caused his visitor's hesitation, but the sight of his proffered proof called up a smile, which seemed to give her confidence, and after a smiling glance at the half blackened uppers, and white edges of the brogues, she began:

"My name, as you see by my card, is Barret—Eunice Barret."

"I was recommended to your firm by Mr. Hamilton—the gentleman whose life you saved, but he said I had better see Mr. Austin; that you were very—"

She paused with a half smile, and then jumping the reason, continued:

"That is why I asked for your partner."

"Phat did ye say was th' raysun, ma'am?"

"Well—he said you might be a *little cross*," was the reply, accompanied by a nervous laugh.

"Well, may th' divil admire him!" muttered Mac.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not catch what you said."

"I said I was much obliged t' him," unblushingly replied the old detective, "an', now, pl'aze tell me yer business—or will ye wait for me partner?"

"Oh, no! Indeed, I *prefer* to tell it to you."

Mac bowed quite gracefully, but grinned most disgracefully, while his fair client continued:

"My business is to engage your firm to solve certain doubts which exist only in *my* mind—as to the identity of the man now traveling through the country under the name of Robert Barret, and to ascertain what has become of the man whom he pretends to be!"

Mac had heard too many queer tales in his long experience to show much surprise, but, as he afterward remarked to Austin, this preliminary statement was "a corker!"

"Is it Robert Barret, the railroad an' steamboat millionaire, ye m'ane?" he asked.

"The same. I am his niece."

"An' phat makes ye think that it's not himself but somebody else he is?"

"Because on the day my uncle was declared insane, Mr. Fulton, his cousin, and my cousin, too, forbade me to approach Mr. Barret's door, saying he was about to have another violent fit."

"Violent fit! Phy, I thought it was softenin' o' the brain?"

"So the papers had it."

"Well, although, I had been forbidden before and had no desire to see or hear my unfortunate uncle as a raving maniac, this unnecessary warning aroused my curiosity."

"We have a very intelligent boy in the house—his mother was my nurse, and he is much attached to me—and calling Jo, I sent him to see what was going on up-stairs."

"He is half Indian, and being warned, did his work without exciting suspicion, returning to me just as Mr. Fulton entered with three physicians, for whom he had gone immediately after warning me against going up-stairs."

"Joe reported that he had heard nothing but my uncle's moans and cries, until Mr. Fulton returned with the doctors. Then, he heard Herman, who was my uncle's attendant say: Five minutes, eh?" and then: "He will do; more might spoil it!"

"Did he see anythin'?"

"Well, yes, he saw, or rather thinks he saw Herman tickling my uncle's feet with something."

"Ticklin' his feet!" echoed the detective and in a curious tone. "Well, now, that's quare."

"Five minits," muttered Mac reflectively, and seemingly reminded of an omission by these words, the visitor continued:

"I should have stated, that each time Mr. Fulton brought the doctors, I noticed that they remained down-stairs for five minutes after he rung the bell."

"Afther who rung the bell?"

"Mr. Fulton."

"Didn't he have a key?"

"Oh, yes, and that is one of my reasons for being suspicious that everything was not as it should have been."

"The doctors came several times, each time accompanied by my cousin, and each time he had forgotten the key—and rung twice!"

"P—haw!" whistled Mac, and looking admiringly at his fair client, asked:

"Anythin' else that ye noticed, that was quare?"

"Yes, my uncle was taken to a private asylum, but remained there only a week."

"Since he left home, neither my mother nor myself, have seen him, but people who knew my uncle, and have accidentally met the man travel-

ing through the country as Robert Barret, declare (according to the newspapers), that they would never recognize him—he is so much changed."

"Where is he, now?"

"I do not know. We have to ask Mr. Fulton, when desirous of learning where he is."

"Hum! Wh'w're th' doctors?"

"Professors Tenerza and Sanders, and Doctor Lewis."

The last named was uttered after a momentary hesitation, accompanied by a slight blush, neither of which escaped keen-eyed, quick-witted Mac.

"I'd like t' talk t' wan o' th' docthors," he said, "will ye allow it?"

"Ye-es," was the hesitating reply, "you might speak to Doctor Lewis."

"Oh, ther' all above suspicion," declared Mac, adding:

"But I'd like t' hear what the' know of it."

"I'd like ye'd be home t'-morra'—I'll be wantin' t' see th' room, 'n' ax some questions."

"I shall be there," returned Miss Barret, and as she was escorted to the elevator, was astonished and amused at the irrelevant remark of the "hod carrier."

"It's a pity ye'r' rich! If yer were poor, we could take ye in wud us!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE "HOD-CARRIER" AND THE DOCTOR.

FROM the "hod-carrier's" last remark, it would appear that he had no mean opinion of Miss Barret's abilities as a detective, and when his partner, "Quiet Jack" Austin (who came in shortly afterward), heard the story, he remarked:

"Wonderfully clever, though it's a remarkably queer story."

"All th' more likely t' be thue!"

"Now, how'll we arrange it? You, in your own quiet way, lock up Misther Fulton, an' me th' docthor an' house?"

"Just as you say—it suits me," carelessly replied Austin, adding, as he arose from his chair:

"Better begin at once, I suppose."

Mac looked admiringly at his partner, who had just returned from a long, and weary—but successful—hunt, and after a half-hour's rest, proposed starting on a new chase.

"Quiet Jack" was the very reverse of his partner in appearance, being a well-dressed, handsome, gentlemanly-looking, unobtrusive man of about thirty-five.

"Well, for an ordinary lookin' chap like yourself, ye'r' th' most dasavin' I ever met!" exclaimed Mac, adding:

"But, I'm not goin' t' let ye kill yerself."

"We'll talk this over while I'm gettin' somethin' t' ate."

"By George! that reminds me, I've had nothing but a cup of coffee to-day."

"Just like ye! Shure it's dead ye'd be, if it wasn't for me."

"Three o'clock, an' nothin' but a sup o' coffee in his stomach."

"Phat are ye med of, anyhow?"

Austin laughed, but made no response; he was accustomed to his partner's remonstrances, though these remonstrances and remarks were none the less deserved.

Under an ordinary exterior, "Quiet Jack" concealed an iron frame; muscles of steel; unflinching nerve, and dauntless courage.

Like his partner, Quiet Jack was a most deceptive man.

While eating, the partners discussed the affair in hand, and on parting decided to hold to the original plan.

"I'll meet you, then, about this time to-morrow," said Austin, adding:

"It's too late to go down-town, so I'll see what's to be learned around the clubs and hotels."

"An' I'm not feelin' well, so I'll consult Docther Lewis," rejoined Mac.

Jack laughed in his quiet way, and started on his tour of the hotels and clubs, while Mac sought "his" physician. We will accompany the latter.

For so young a man—he was about twenty-eight—Doctor Lewis had become quite prominent in his profession, and though Mac did not know him, he knew of him.

"There's no more doubt of his honor, than there is of his ability," mused Mac, as he proceeded on his way, "and if there was any foul play, it's strange that he didn't discover it."

"One thing is certain—the fair Eunice has more than a family physician regard for him."

"It would be a mighty fine match for him, for some of the Barret millions will surely come

er—and besides, she's a splendid girl—sharp as a steel-trap, too, or she wouldn't have noticed so many little points.

"As Jack says, it is a truly remarkable tale, but, I'll be hanged if I don't take a good deal of stock in that girl's intuitive detective qualities."

Thus musing, Mac arrived at Doctor Lewis's handsome residence, and though the colored gentleman, who came to the door, viewed with contempt the bent figure, and old-fashioned clothing, he did not hesitate a moment.

Doctor Lewis had many poor patients, and hesitation about admitting one of them, had cost his predecessor of the present colored gentleman his position, so Mac was instantly admitted to the doctor's study.

Doctor Lewis was engaged with some writing, and requesting to be excused "for a few minutes," waved the visitor to a chair beside his desk.

This was just what Mac wanted, for it gave him an opportunity to "size up" his man, before talking to him.

"That man's full of grit—thinks like thunder, and acts like lightning."

"A bad man for an enemy, but no better for a friend."

"Straight as a string, too, and I'll bet on it!"

Such was the detective's estimate of Doctor Frank Lewis, as he looked at the flashing black eyes, firm mouth, determined chin, and noble, thoughtful brow of the writer.

In a few minutes, the doctor threw down his pen, and, turning to his supposed poor patient, in a pleasant, cheery way, asked:

"Well, sir, what's the trouble?"

"A gr'ate d'ale, sur, a gr'ate d'ale," replied Mac.

"Well?" (a little impatiently.)

"Well, sur, I'd like t' know, if ye ever attended Misther Robert Barret?"

"What has that to do with your trouble?" asked the surprised physician, adding:

"Are you troubled in the same way?"

"Well, sur, I don't know but I might be—some time."

Doctor Lewis looked perplexed—half angry, but not wishing to hurt the feelings of his poor patient, said:

"You will have to be more explicit, sir. My time is entirely at your service, as far as necessary, but it is of value to me, and I cannot afford to waste it."

"But ye *did* attend Misther Barret?" persisted Mac.

"I did!"

"Well, now, w'u'd ye p'laze t' tell me, if ye thought ther' was anythin' wrong about that case?"

If the physician was surprised before, he was amazed now.

"What do you mean?" he asked, slowly, and looking sharply at the detective.

"Well, suppose you wanted t' dhrive me mad—couldn't ye do it be ticklin' me feet?"

Starting up, as though struck a sudden blow, the physician began:

"By heavens! Could—"

"The girl is right!" decided Mac, and aloud:

"Ye think ye could, sur?"

Looking at the detective suspiciously, Lewis replied:

"If you have come to me to discuss supposititious cases, I must beg to be excused. 'I supposed you were a poor person, here to ask for treatment, but as you appear to have come merely to talk of other people's troubles, you will be kind enough to CLEAR OUT!'"

The last words were fairly shouted, and Mac arose, saying, very meekly:

"Yis, sur, but Miss Eunice 'll be sorry—"

"Miss who?" interrupted the other.

"Phy, I thought ye knew," innocently replied Mac. "Miss Eunice Barret wanted me t' talk t' ye about her uncle."

"Why didn't you say so at once?" demanded Lewis, irately.

"Oh, it's a way I have, an' sure I can't help it—it wuz born in me."

(Mac spoke the truth, and though he had not acted as was usual with him in dealing with Eunice Barret, it was fear of his "way," that caused Mr. Hamilton to recommend Austin as the man to confer with.)

"Well, it's a mighty poor way, I can assure you," remarked Lewis, and then growing suspicious as he gazed at the queer-looking character before him, asked:

"How do I know that you come from Miss Barret?"

"Faith, I dunno, onliss ye'll take me word for it," replied Mac with a grin; and then, seeing that the young physician was firing up again, continued:

"She kam t' consult me t'-day, an' said I might ax you some queskins."

"Came to consult you?" repeated Lewis, incredulously. "Who are you?"

"No wan very pertic'lar, sir, but me name is ginerally McVeigh."

"What! The hod—" began the doctor, and then with one sharp glance at Mac's famous footwear, burst out laughing.

"I've no apology to offer; the case demands none," he said, when his mirth had subsided.

"Indeed," continued Lewis, "I think you should make the apology for springing yourself on me without warning."

The "hod-carrier" grinned at the compliment, and returning to the object of his visit, asked:

"An' now, will ye p'laze tell me if ye saw anythin' suspicious about that case?"

Doctor Lewis instantly became grave, and looked a little perplexed by the question.

"As one of those who signed the medical certificate, I should be the last to say that I thought there was anything suspicious about that case," he replied, after several minutes' deep thought.

"But was ther'?"

"Certainly not to be seen, or I should not have signed the papers, nor would those with whom I was called in; but you have awakened a queer idea that has been slumbering since it flashed through my brain, on the day the papers were signed."

The doctor paused irresolutely, and then suddenly asked:

"You know the delusion under which Mr. Barret suffered, I suppose?"

"Faith, I don't!"

"You must excuse my asking you to solemnly assure me that that is true."

Doctor Lewis spoke earnestly, and evidently attached great importance to the detective's answer, but there was nothing solemn about it.

"Arrah, go an wud yer solemn assurances! Sure she didn't, an' thin how th' divil c'u'd I know?"

"Miss Barret does not know of it?"

"Well, if she does, I'll take me book oath nayther she nor any one else tould me!"

"Strangel! Tell me why you stated that supposititious case about tickling a man's feet?"

Mac related what the boy thought he saw through the keyhole.

From the doctor's manner and question the detective already suspected that there was more in the boy's story than was at first supposed, but he was hardly prepared to hear Lewis exclaim:

"Great Heavens! Can it be possible?"

He sprang up, and began nervously pacing the floor, exhibiting a great deal of agitation, but after a few minutes grew calmer, and stopping in front of Mac, said:

"From what you tell me, I fear a great wrong has been committed, and partly through my fault—but, of that you shall judge."

"Have I your word, that what you are about to hear, will not be repeated?"

Mac had been doing some tall thinking himself, and had concluded that the doctor would be a valuable, and willing ally in undoing the terrible wrong, which he now felt sure had been committed, and he replied:

"Until we kin prove our case, I'll never sp'ake of it."

"Good! Mr. Barret's *supposed* delusion was that a devil was tormenting, burning, his feet!"

"I say *supposed*, because I now believe there was a devil—a fiend in human form—doing so."

"Only recently in France, through a dying confession, it was learned that a man had been driven mad, by having the soles of his feet tickled with a feather dipped in oil."

"Yes, I heard of it," calmly put in Mac.

"You did! Well—the boy only thought he saw something, but I saw the oil!"

"Saw the oil," repeated Mac, a little puzzled.

"Yes, the day the papers were signed, I saw something glistening on the sole of Mr. Barret's foot!"

The doctor then went on to tell what occurred after that, and when he had finished, said:

"It was your supposititious case, that brought to my mind the French case, which flashed across me when I saw the oil, but the reputation of my colleagues, and the fact that the man was undoubtedly mad at the time, caused me to dismiss the idea."

"And now?"

"Now, I am satisfied that I was criminally negligent, in not refusing to sign them, until I had an opportunity of staying awhile with the patient—that is, after what I had seen, but I will join you in this work, and drop everything until the wrong is righted!"

Mac had a holy horror of amateur assistance, but remembering Eunice's remark about a private asylum, said:

"Well, th' first thing t' do is—notbin' at all."

"If ye stir, or sp'ake, before ye'r' tould to, I'll give up th' case. I'll dhrop in on' ye t'-morra. Good-night, sir, an' I'm much obliged t' ye."

CHAPTER XII.

SHADOWED.

HE would be a clever man indeed, who could, undetected, shadow the "hod-carrier" for any distance, and, now, on his way home to "think it over," the detective was less preoccupied, than when on his way to visit Doctor Lewis.

Mac's shadow on the other hand, emboldened by his success became less cautious, and soon the detective became aware that he was being followed.

"What the deuce does it mean?" muttered Mac, much puzzled.

Having taken up the Barret matter only a few hours before, he could hardly bring himself to believe, that that was the cause of the attention he was receiving.

"But it must be," mused Mac, for, when Jack arrived this afternoon, that cleared the calendar of all the old cases, and this is the only new one. "I wonder where he picked me up? Well, I'll find out who he is, anyhow."

After leaving Doctor Lewis, the detective had crossed to Madison avenue, down which he was walking, at a gait suited to his age and character, when he discovered the "shadow."

He was now close to the house of Harry Hamilton, (a man whom he and his partner had cleared of a charge of murder,) and, as this occurred to him, the fertile brain of Mac suggested a plan, which was immediately executed.

Mr. Hamilton's residence adjoined the avenue, and by turning the corner quickly, Mac could have darted into the house, and thus "lose" his shadow, for as it was still early in the night, some of the servants—and all knew him—would be about the door, and the lattice gate at the basement open.

But Mac's purpose was to "find" his shadow—not "lose" him.

Accordingly, as he approached the corner, the "hod-carrier" slackened his already slow gait, and, as he turned, saw two of the Hamilton servants at the gate.

"Don't seem t' know me," warned Mac, as he approached the girls, and then stopping when a yard away, as if to ask a question, continued: "You, Mary, tell me t' come inside an' pade the way. You, Maggie, come right after us."

The quick-witted girls instantly comprehended that Mac was "on business," and followed his instructions to the letter.

Once inside, the detective continued:

"Now, Mary, there's a chap across the sthreet that's follyin' me, an' I want t' have a chance t' folly him. So, take this inviloop, an' go down th' sthreet wud it. Walk fast, an' carry it in yer hand."

"This chap 'll be afther biddin' ye good-evenin' purty soon, an' thin sthick th' inviloop in yer pocket."

"He'll offer ye somethin' for it, but don't give it to him—though divil a thing's in it."

"Thin he'll ax ye about me, an' ye kin tell him, innocent-like, that I brought a message from Doctor Lewis t' Maggie, an' that's all ye know about it."

"But, maybe he might follow me, an' then he'd know 'twas a story I was tellin' him. 'Couldn't I say, after a bit, that I was goin to the stationery store, t' match this?"

"Begob, ye'r' a jewel, Mary! Do just that, an' ye'll find somethin' here for ye, when ye get back. Be off, wud ye, now!"

Mary obeyed, carrying the empty envelope conspicuously thrust a little in front, and walking rapidly.

The family were away in the country, and Mac hurried to the parlor window, from which he quickly had the satisfaction of seeing his "shadow" following Mary.

"Now, me bucko, I've got ye!" he exclaimed, full of glee over his easy success, and began using the parlor as an (undressing) room.

Hat, coat, trousers, even the famous brogans were removed, and, of course, replaced—and with the rapidity of a "lightning-change artist."

Underneath the "Sunda' coat" was a short, close-fitting sack; also a pair of low-cut patent-leather shoes, which, when not in use, served to give Mac a slightly humped-back appearance.

The "Sunda' pants,"—a string at the pocket

being pulled—ripped all the way down the side, revealing trousers matching the short sack.

Having slipped on the patent leathers, Mac pulled a soft, dove-colored, hat from his pocket, and, only that his voice reassured Maggie, she would have screamed for the police when he appeared before her.

"Arrah, bad 'cess t' ye!" he exclaimed on seeing her start back in alarm, "can't a man change his duds?"

"Gimme a wet towel, quick!"

Still trembling, Maggie obeyed, and Mac began scrubbing his face.

While thus engaged, he managed to give Maggie her instructions:

"This laddybuck 'll be here purty soon, t' ax ye what I wanted wud ye. Tell him ye wor lookin' fur a 'place,' an' that ye'r' recommended t' Docthor Lewis, an' that he sint afther ye, an' that ye haven't decided yit whether ye'll go or stay."

"If he axes any more, get mad!"

"Where's me hat?"

"Oh! Here's ten dollars—divide it, and take good care of those things up-stairs!"

And, snatching up the hat he had left aside, while scrubbing, Mac darted out, leaving Maggie half-fainting, and uncertain whether, after all, it was the "hod-carrier" who came down-stairs.

When Mac's face emerged from the towel, the last trace of the "hod-carrier" had disappeared, and the astonished girl saw a fresh-faced young man with prematurely gray hair—a lasting memento of a terrible experience.

The bang of the gate recalled Maggie to the fact that she, too, had something to do, and, picking up the ten-dollar bill, she took her position at the gate.

She had not long to wait. Five minutes after Mac had left, a short, thick-set, loudly-dressed, and altogether ill-favored fellow, came along inquiring for "Maggie Sullivan," and, before she got rid of him, Maggie was compelled to follow Mac's suggestion, namely, "get mad."

"Be off, or I'll call the police!" she threatened, and the baffled "shadower" left her.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHADOWING THE SHADOWER.

MAC chuckled as he saw his shadower driven away from the Hamilton residence, but was rather startled when he saw the latter's face.

The "shadow" was a private detective!

Secure in his disguise, Mac had stood leaning against an electric light, pale, watching the "shadow" and Maggie, and when the former was driven off, he passed close to the detective, who instantly recognized him as Dick Wilson, an employee of one of the many so-called detective agencies.

"Well! This is a funny caper, by Jove!" commented Mac, with a perplexed laugh, as he fell in behind Wilson, and began shadowing the "shadow."

He knew the man and his employers well, and neither bore a very good character—Wilson being an ex-convict, and the agency of the class whose principal business is finding evidence in divorce cases, which they generally manage to do, according to the wishes of the man or woman who pays them best.

Knowing this, Mac was sorely puzzled to account for Wilson's shadowing him, for he could not believe that Fulton (whom he suspected of being the mainspring of the wrong in the Barret matter), who was a man prominent in business and social circles, would have any connection with such people.

But if Mac was puzzled when he began to take his turn at shadowing, he was dumfounded, fairly paralyzed, at the finish.

Straight ahead went Dick Wilson, until, as they neared Madison Square, Mac began to suspect that notwithstanding the character of the "Bogus Detective Agency," Mr. Fulton was their employer.

"By Jupiter! Now we know our gentleman for what he is!"

This exclamation was caused by Mac's seeing his former "shadow" turn into the old-fashioned Barret Mansion.

Not only did Wilson turn in there, but, instead of ringing for admission, he took a key from his pocket, with which he opened the door.

And a servant, leaning on the gate, did not seem to remark anything unusual about this ex-felon entering the millionaire's residence!

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Mac, as he saw the ex-convict pass himself into the house.

"Evidently this is nothing new. That fellow is as much at home there as the unfortunate owner formerly was."

That was surprise number two, but number three—and the most startling—was yet to come.

Sauntering along in a careless way, Mac stopped in front of the servant girl, thinking, as he did so, that once again the situations of Wilson and himself were reversed.

"Is Mr. Barret or Mr. Fulton at home?" asked Mac.

The girl stared on hearing the first name, but replied:

"Mr. Barret hasn't been here since I came. He's travelin'."

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten that," blandly assented Mac, adding:

"And Mr. Fulton—he is in, I presume?"

He made a step forward, as if about to ascend to the door, but the servant stopped him with the startling announcement:

"Mr. Fulton isn't in town. There is no one here now but Miss Barret and her mother."

"Thank you," returned Mac, as he walked away, stopping mechanically at the next corner to keep the house in view.

He was simply paralyzed by what he had heard, for, if Fulton was away—and there was no reason to doubt the girl's statement—then Wilson's employer must be Miss Barret or her mother!

Could mother and daughter be opposed—or—but no, the detective could not believe that the beautiful girl who had engaged him was playing a double game.

"But, if the mother's on the other side, how the deuce am I to see the daughter, without exposing the fact that I am in the game?"

"Pshaw! My brains must be wool-gathering. If that wasn't known already, why would this fellow be following me?"

Thus musing, and muttering occasionally, Mac continued to watch the house until an hour had passed.

"What the deuce can be keeping him so long? Can it be possible that he lives there?"

As this idea suggested itself to Mac, he saw a servant—a negro—coming out of the house next the Barrets, carrying a pitcher.

All the residents of the neighborhood were out of town, it was about ten o'clock, and this was not the first pitcher the detective had seen traveling to the beer saloon on Fourth avenue.

A man of fertile imagination, Mac quickly formulated a plan, and as the negro was passing, hailed him.

"Hello!" he said. "Going for beer?"

"Yas, sah. Boss doan't min' us gettin' a little 'foah we go t' bed."

"I'm glad to hear it, for if you'll give me a glass, I'll pay for the full of your pitcher."

"Well, ye kin jes' bet I will!"

"Good enough! Here's a quarter."

The negro took the money, and soon returned with a foaming pitcher of beer.

"Kean't ye come up t' d' house?" he asked, looking curiously at Mac.

"Oh, yes; but I can't go inside. I've got to stay on the sidewalk."

This, of course, added to the negro's curiosity, and when he brought out a glass of beer, Mac still further increased it, by remarking:

"By George, that is good! I was as dry as a fish, but didn't dare go away."

"Watchin' a house?" hazarded the darky.

"Yes, and, being the first night, I'm afraid to stir."

Mac was about to offer the negro a cigar, in order to keep him in conversation, when the latter, remarked:

"Feller next door's got a nice snap. Healthy watchin' he does. Lives in d' house, gets his meals dere, 'n' goes t' sleep jes' d' same 'z d' rest."

"Where?"

"Right nex' doah, heah, in d' Barrets' house. See him go in, 'bout 'n hour 'go."

"Watchman eh?" thought Mac. "Watchman—at four dollars a day, and the same or more for the night? Well, I guess not!"

Except that Wilson had been an occupant of the Barret house, since the family had gone to the country, the negro could tell nothing further, and, with the excuse that he "must keep movin'," Mac bade his informant "good-night."

He was puzzled as to whether he should risk a visit to the Barret residence or send for Miss Barret.

"This Wilson's followed her," thought Mac, and that's how my connection with the matter became known.

"If I send for her to-morrow, she'll be followed again, and thus remove any dust I may have thrown in that fellow's eyes to-night."

"If I go there—By George, I've got it! I'll use that boy—Joe, she called him. He can carry my questions, and keep me posted."

"I must post her about this affair, for, of course, it won't do to allow that fellow to spring any traps on her."

"I'll send for Quiet Jack in the morning, and talk it over with him."

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK REPORTS AND DISAPPEARS.

NEXT morning, before leaving the hotel where he had spent the night—for he would not think of going to his two modest rooms, except as the "hod-carrier"—Mac called two messenger boys, one of whom he dispatched to Mr. Hamilton's house, and the other to Austin.

The first messenger had returned, and Mac was once more the "hod-carrier," when Quiet Jack, made his appearance.

"Ye'r' lookin' very shwell this mornin'?" said Mac, commenting on his partner's elegant "get-up."

"Going down among my Wall street friends," replied Austin.

The reply was perfectly sincere, for the speaker had made many friends and acquaintances among bankers and brokers, who supposed he was a man of wealth.

"Well, did you learn anythin'?"

"Only that Mr. Fulton is regarded as a man of great business ability; highly respected by his associates, and admired for the skillful manner in which he has managed to fill Robert Barret's shoes."

"He's a keen scoundrel, Jack," observed the "hod-carrier," thoughtfully, an' we're goin' t' have a tough job, t' prove anythin' ag'in' him."

"Then you are satisfied that Fulton is at the bottom of this alleged queer business—that is, if there is any bottom to it?"

"Faith the' is a bottom to it, an' ther's no allege about it all."

"I had a shadow' wud me last night."

"The devil!"

"No, Dick Wilson—ye know the laddybuck."

"Well, Misther Wilson picked me up—for th' second time, I'm purty sure, after I left th' docthor's."

"Av coarse, he wasn't long at his thricks, before I knew it, 'n' I took a notion t' find out who he was workin' for, an' where d'ye' think Misther Wilson fetched up?"

"Give it up."

"At the Barret mansion; an', phat's more, he lives there!"

Austin looked greatly astonished, but made no remark, and his partner went on to relate his night's experience.

The interview with Doctor Lewis appeared to make a great impression on Quiet Jack.

"That is the key to the whole affair," he declared, "and the first thing to do is, find this fellow Herman."

"He's reported t' be wud, what Miss Barret calls th' bogus Misther Barret."

"And where is he?"

"That ye've got t' ax Misther Fulton, an' he's away now, but that brings up another question: Shall I call on Miss B., or let you take me place?"

"What is there to be done?"

"Well, I dunno that ther's much, outside of a queskin or two about her mother, an' Wilson, an' t' warn her that he's on the watch."

"If I go, he'll know me, an' if I make any change she—but the fact is, Jack, I don't want t' make the change, so you go."

"Very well," replied Austin, in an absent way that showed he was thinking, and Mac did not disturb him.

Suddenly, Austin stood up, saying:

"Well, I'll be off to your Miss Barret, and meet you here when I get through."

"An' phot'll I be doin' here, 'n' the office closed, 'n' the b'y waitin' t' get in?"

"Never mind that," cheerfully returned Jack, "I'm not going back to the office. Fact is, Mac, we'll have to dissolve partnership!"

For fully a minute, Mac stared at Austin, as though he thought the latter had suddenly gone mad. Then a light broke upon him, and he nodded approvingly.

"Connection with you will only place me under surveillance, like yourself," continued Jack, "so I will no longer appear at the office, and I think it would be wise to remove my name from the door."

"I will take an office down-town, and may thus avoid suspicion—for you can rely on it, Mac, that if this is what we think it is, we are nitted against not only Fulton, Wilson and this Herman, but a dozen or more."

"The thing is too big to take any chances, and there are probably a dozen of this man's agents on the lookout for interference."

"I will be watched when I leave there, but that will just suit me, for if they will only trace me carefully, they will find I am just about to open a brokerage office."

"Good enough! Ye've got a good head, Jack, an' if ther' wuz twinty ag'in' us, we'll b'ate them," said Mac, adding:

"But it'd be betther not t' come back here at all. Just drop me a line on yer way down-town, an', av coorse, fix on yer office address, so I kin r'ache ye any time."

"Very well; I'll write you from some down-town hotel, and fix upon an office by noon, so you will have a letter by four or five this afternoon."

"After this, of course, we shall have to meet in disguise."

With the last words, Quiet Jack was on his way to visit Miss Barret, and having nothing else to claim his attention, the "hod-carrier" started for his office, where he proceeded to have Austin's name removed from the sign.

Four, five, six o'clock passed without any letter from Jack, and becoming uneasy, the "hod-carrier" visited the quiet hotel where his partner resided, but he had not been there, nor did he arrive up to the time Mac departed—midnight.

CHAPTER XV.

A QUEER INTERVIEW.

THE "hod-carrier" passed a rather uncomfortable night, because of his partner's failure either to report or turn up at his hotel, and was at the office early next morning looking for a letter, but there was none from Jack.

"That's quare," muttered Mac, and calling a messenger, dispatched him with a letter to Austin's hotel.

"Not in, sir. Hasn't been there since yest'd'y mornin'," reported the boy, who returned within a few minutes—the hotel having been chosen because of its proximity to the office.

Mac was puzzled and uneasy over this, and bidding the messenger wait, passed into the private office where, for a few minutes, he remained in deep thought.

No one knew better than the "hod-carrier" the dangerous possibilities of his calling, and with a keen appreciation of the fact that, in this case, the stakes were so vast, that nothing would be stopped at, he sent the boy back with the letter.

"Give it to the clerk, and tell him it is to be given to no one but Mr. Austin—no messenger from him, with or without an order for mail, is to receive that letter."

"When you've done that," continued Mac, after a sharp look at the messenger boy, "come back here. The door will be locked, but here is the key, and remain until I return."

"If Mr. Austin comes here, tell him to wait. If any one else calls, get the name and address, but you can say you don't know where I'm gone, or when I'll be back."

The messenger boy nodded intelligently, and asked:

"If you are not back, when'll I close up?"

"Five o'clock will do, and if I'm not back by that time, open the office to-morrow. I'll arrange with your manager."

The boy took the key and departed, while Mac hurriedly transformed himself into a very swell looking young man, after which he sat down to await the return of the sharp-eyed messenger, upon whom he wished to test the effect of the change.

From the detective's instructions to the boy, it will be seen that he was preparing for a prolonged absence from his office, although Miss Barret's residence was within ten minutes' walk.

Apparently, the change was an effectual disguise, for when the messenger returned, he accepted the statement, that Mr. McVeigh had left the elegant looking gentleman in charge of the office, without question.

Satisfied on this head, the detective proceeded to the nearest livery stable, engaged a *coupe* with a liveried driver, and was driven to the Barret mansion.

As the cab stopped at the door, Mac, as he stepped out, saw Miss Barret peeping through the curtains, but, to his astonishment, was informed by the servant who came to the door, that Miss Barret was not at home!

Mac's business had not brought him any knowledge of the habits of fashionable ladies, and, thinking that perhaps his call was made too early, he left a beautifully engraved card, saying he would call again.

"To the Park!" ordered the detective, as he re-entered the *coupe*.

"Now if you want to do any shadowing, come

right along," he continued, and, telling the driver to go slow, seated himself.

A long drive through the Park, and luncheon at a famous road-house, passed away the time until three in the afternoon, when "Mr. Fred-eric Ormond" again called at the Barret mansion.

This time, it was Miss Barret, herself, who came to the door, and greeting him pleasantly, invited him into the parlor.

"How the deuce did she recognize me?" wondered Mac, as he followed her into the cool, darkened parlor, and, in a more polite form, that was the first question he asked Miss Barret.

"Why, there was no trouble in that. I have good eyes, and know how to use them," was the smiling reply.

"You have indeed!" thought the discomfited detective, who had intended to introduce himself as his own agent, for there were few who felt at all certain that they knew McVeigh, the detective, as his natural self.

"Austin called on you yesterday," he said, tentatively.

"Yes, but he's been taken care of by this time," was the queer reply.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you should know more about that than I do!" impatiently answered the lady.

"What has Jack been doing, or saying?" Mac wonderingly asked himself, and aloud:

"Did you know that you were being watched?"

"Me watched? Nonsense!"

"I tell you it is so!" asserted Mac. "Dick Wilson is here really to watch you."

"If I thought that—" began the lady, in a strangely threatening tone, when the door-bell was rung, and, interrupting herself, she exclaimed:

"Slip down, and out through the basement, quick!"

"It must be that old fool they call the hod-carrier! I've been waiting all day for him."

"I'll send him after his partner, and then you must return and tell me what you mean."

For a couple of moments Mac sat paralyzed by this speech.

"Hurry!" commanded the lady, and, mechanically, the bewildered detective obeyed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COCKNEY.

To say that Mac was astonished, to hear himself spoken of as "that old fool they call the hod-carrier," is putting the state he was in on leaving the parlor, very mildly; but, before he had reached the bottom of the basement steps, the detective instinct had asserted itself and "Richard was himself again."

"She mistook me for somebody else, and that somebody may have just arrived, so I had better make myself scarce," he decided, and hurrying through the hall jumped into the *coupe*.

"Drive slow to the next corner! Turn into Broadway, and then go for all you're worth to the Battery!"

Cabmen are accustomed to receiving all kinds of orders, and without winking at this decidedly queer one, the driver obeyed.

Whether there was any attempt, or intention, to follow him, Mac never knew, but following his directions to the letter, (and thereby causing much profanity among pedestrians and other drivers,) the *coupe* driver opened the door, at the Battery, just twenty minutes after leaving the Barret mansion, to inquire:

"Where to now, sir?"

Mac could not forbear smiling at the stonily calm countenance of the driver, but he appreciated the tact that caused the man to look up the street while asking the question, for the detective had been altering his appearance, and the other evidently did not wish to appear to notice it.

In reply to the driver's question, Mac shoved a ten-dollar bill into the hand resting on the window, and stepped out, saying:

"Phin I want a sensible man that knows how t' hould his tongue, ag'in, I'll look for ye, avick."

The driver now stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment. Mac had often engaged his services—as the "hod-carrier," but now he bore every appearance of an Englishman, having, (in addition to other changes,) grown a pair of mutton-chop whiskers while riding down-town.

"Well, I'll be—(not blest)!" exclaimed the driver, as his fare walked off toward the Stevens House. "If that ain't himself, it's his voice, anyhow!"

Into the Stevens House turned Mac, through

the bar, out into Morris street, along Greenwich, across Fulton, into Park Row, and then jumped onto a car, which he left as it entered the Bowery.

All this was not done for amusement. On the way down-town, Mac's brain had been much more busy than his busy hands.

He was considerably troubled by Miss Barret's statement that Jack had "been taken care of by this time."

It sounded ominously followed by "that old fool they call the 'hod-carrier'," yet, why had she sought their assistance? They had not been interested in the Barret matter, nor troubling her, or Fulton, in any way.

"She paid the biggest retaining fee I ever received," muttered the mystified detective, as he sauntered up the Bowery, "but I'd willingly give it back to know that Jack was safe and alive."

Still pondering over the strange occurrences of the past forty-eight hours, Mac entered a costumer's.

Half an hour later he emerged still wearing the "mutton-chops," but dressed in a decidedly loud suit of clothes, and looking like an English "crook."

It was about six o'clock when the detective returned to the street, and the great tide of honest working humanity that swells through the Bowery morning and evening was at its flood.

More to get out of the way, and have a chance to think, than anything else, Mac entered a saloon, which chanced to be one of those old-fashioned places, where the regular customer sits down and sips his beer—spending an hour over one glass, if he feels so disposed.

Old fashioned or new fangled, it would have been all the same to the detective. He wanted to think, and he wanted to sit down, and, on entering the saloon he took possession of the first vacant chair he saw, saying to the barkeeper:

"A pint of 'alf 'n' 'alf, if you please!"

"Vot's dot you say?" demanded the old German behind the bar.

"Hi said plain hencough, I 'ope—a pint hof 'alf 'n' 'alf!"

"Ve don'd sell no bints do gustomers at de dables," replied the German, amid a roar of laughter from a half dozen men sitting near the detective.

One thing Mac never forgot—the language or slang of the character he was assuming, and although his brain was busy with Jack and the Barret mystery, he was talking the cockney—the character he wished to assume.

The roar of laughter awakened him to the fact that he was attracting attention, and, also, that the saloon-keeper was angry—two things that he, just then, wished to avoid.

Mac was about to get up and leave the place, when happening to glance at the laughing party at the next table, his eye fell upon Dick Wilson.

The latter, from the expression of his face, was heartily enjoying the fun, and Mac's intention changed instantly.

"Hi say, lads!" he cried, appealing more particularly to the private detective, "wot's the matter with this chap? Cawn't a chap border 'is pint 'ere? No bloomin' chawff, now, for Hi don't know hanythin' habout the bleedin' country, ye know."

"Come over here," replied Wil-on, laughing, "we'll initiate you," and to the landlord:

"Here, Jake! Give his jags a bottle of Bass, and a bottle of Guinness."

"Hif you gentlemen will join me Hi shall be pleased," said Mac, as he took a seat opposite Wilson. "Hi'm a Brummagen bloke hand Hi 'ates t' be guded."

The pseudo-cockney looked around, and threw a coin on the table, as he uttered this in a defiant manner.

CHAPTER XVII.

MAC UNDERTAKES A MURDER.

THE coin was an English two-shilling piece, which Mac had received in change months before, and had since carried as a pocket piece.

Wilson looked at the piece, and laughingly observed:

"If you offered this to Jake, he'd think ye were shovin' the 'queer'—counterfeiter, ye know—and crack ye over the nut with a mallet."

"Coiner, ye mean? Well, give it 'ere—Hi wouldn't part with that two-'bob' for one hof ye'r bloomin' dollars."

"May be it's all you've got?" innocently suggested one of the party.

"Hoh, nol! Hi've got plenty hof 'blunt', but hits hall in Hamerican money, ye know."

This interesting information rendered the entire party more respectful, and very attentive

to the stranger, who "bled" freely, and invariably remarked, as he paid for the drinks:

"There's plenty more where that came from." Mac's (new) countenance was decidedly knavish, and, as the constant repetition of this remark attracted his attention, Wilson set down the cockney as an English crook.

"I'll cultivate him," decided the ex-convict, partly with a vague idea that he might be able to make use of "Arry Roser" (Mac's new name), but principally because he hoped to ascertain where that "plenty more" was to come from.

An hour after the detective entered the saloon, his new-found friends departed, leaving him with real reluctance, but it was still too early, and Mac too sober, to attempt any "funny" business, so, having something of importance to attend to, the party broke up.

Wilson, however, remained, and as they conversed, hinted his suspicions of the detective's character, which the latter tacitly admitted to be true.

Thus encouraged, the ex-convict came out boldly, asking:

"What's your line, Roser?"

"Hanythin' from pitch'n' toss t' manslaughter," was the reckless reply.

The last word seemed to strike Wilson with peculiar force, and he asked:

"Ever done any of that?"

"Hany hof w'ot?"

"Manslaughter."

"Say, w'ot's your lay?" demanded Roser, looking very suspicious.

"Safes, generally, with an odd burglary," carelessly replied the felon.

("Sneak-thief and pickpocket," was the memo. under his photo. in the Rogues' Gallery.)

Roser gazed admiringly at the speaker, and inquired:

"W'ot did ye ax that for?"

"Well, it's not in my line, but I know where there's money t' be made for a little job o' that kind—it's safe, too," replied the other, adding:

"But I suppose you've got too much 'dust' to do anythin' for a while?"

"No—Hi'm 'tendin' t' business hall the time. W'ot's yer little game?"

"Well, it's a detective—"

"A detective?" interrupted Roser.

"Yes. Scared already?" sneered Jack.

"No! Hi'd just like t' get a chance at one Hi knows of!" was the savage reply.

"Scotland Yard, I suppose," remarked Wilson, with a malicious grin.

"Then you'll take the job?" he continued.

"Tell me somethin' about it, 'n' Hi'll tell ye. 'Oo is he? his bit t' be done 'ere?"

Wilson regarded the cockney long and carefully before answering. He was favorably impressed by the other's cautiousness, and finally replied:

"He's a private detective, and it's t' be done here—right back of this house!"

"It's a safe an' easy job, 'n' it's worth a pretty penny—but, come, let's go into the rear 'n' talk it over."

Passing out the side door, and back through the hall, Dick Wilson led the way across the yard into a tumble-down, two-story frame house, which appeared to be deserted.

The house was situated at the end of a long yard, fully one hundred and fifty feet from the front house, and almost entirely hidden from view of the latter by two trees, with low, wide-spreading branches.

This house, and there were many like it until quite recently, looked old enough to have been, and probably was at one time, on the line of the "Bowerie"—the old Boston Post Road.

When the ex-convict said that the intended victim was a private detective, Mac's heart leaped, connecting this fact with Miss Barret's declaration that Jack Austin had been "taken care of."

Mac noted the isolated situation of the old house, between two noisy streets, and offering every facility for the secure commission of crime, or a rendezvous for criminals, and wondered if this was a trap.

He did not hesitate, however, but on reaching the door, demanded:

"Stop 'ere! Let's 'ear w'ot ye've t' say, before we meet th' cove."

"Scared again?"

"No, Hi hain't funkin', but Hi want t' know 'w'ot Hi'm habout."

"Well, you won't get any further than this room, until I'm sure you'll go ahead with the job, an' not then, if you don't swear silence."

While speaking, Wilson was unlocking the door, and as he finished led the way in.

"Take a seat," he said, after carefully closing

and locking the door, which Mac quickly saw was anything but the frail, worm-eaten affair it appeared to be from the outside, being strengthened by heavy planking and cross-pieces, from top to bottom!

Again, the suspicion flashed across the detective that he was being led into—if not already in—a trap!

There were but two chairs in the room. One was near the wall, which Wilson took possession of, and the other in the center of the floor.

Dim as the light was, Mac instantly detected the faint lines of a trap-door about the chair!

Standing just outside the line of danger, with both hands thrust into the pocket of his loose sack coat, Mac looked very inoffensive, as he declared his intention of standing until their business was concluded. Yet the first sign of treachery would have cost Dick, the felon, his life, for the detective had learned the Australian trick of shooting through the pocket, and each hand rested on the butt of a revolver.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN A BAD BOX.

"ALL right, suit yourself!" rejoined Wilson, on hearing the cockney declare his intention of standing.

"Now are you ready to swear you'll keep your trap closed about this, and anything else you see?" he continued.

"Swear be 'anged! D'ye think Hi'm a bloody fool—t' put ha rope round me bloomin' neck?"

This was a very convincing argument, and Dick added:

"All right! I've told you who this duck is, and now I tell ye it's worth a cool five hundred t' rap him over the head 'n' drop him through that trap! Now, are you ready t' earn the dust?"

"Hi am, but, why don't you bearn it, yourself? Hit's a tidy lump t' pick up so heavy."

"Well, I don't want it! It's not in my line—and I can't, and won't do it, I tell ye!"

(The latter part of this was uttered as if the speaker was in conversation with some third person, causing Mac to surmise that Wilson was under orders to, himself, put the prisoner out of the way—out of the world.)

"Where is 'ef' asked the cockney.

"Up-stairs. Come on!"

"Wait a bit! Ye don't s'pose Hi want hany witnesses, do ye? When we bring him down 'ere, you've got t' get hout."

Wilson hesitated a moment, but apparently too anxious to object, agreed to this, saying:

"Very well; I'll give you fifteen minutes; but don't stand talkin' all night! Come on!"

Unlocking another door, the excited scoundrel led the way to the next floor, where, amid piles of merchandise of every description, Mac distinguished the form of a man lying on the floor.

The prisoner was not gagged, and as they entered moaned:

"Water! For God's sake, water!"

Paying no attention to the piteous appeal, Wilson stooped to lift the prisoner's feet, but seeing that his confederate made no movement, demanded the reason.

"Give 'im ha drink!" was the reply.

"Oh, what does he want with a drink?" exclaimed the ruffian, adding, with a brutal laugh:

"He'll have plenty, when he strikes the sewer!"

"Water!" moaned the prisoner.

"Give it him, or you does the job yerself," threatened Mac.

"There's none on this floor," sulkily objected Wilson.

"Go for hit!"

Cursing the English obstinacy of his companion, the heartless ruffian left the room, and Mac stooped to look at the face of the prisoner.

As he hoped and prayed—it was Jack Austin!

The latter, however, was almost delirious, and did not recognize his anxious partner, who felt inclined to throttle Wilson when he returned with the water.

"You're darn careful of him," sneered the ruffian, seeing Mac raise the prisoner's head, and, supporting it on his knee, hold the glass to the latter's lips.

"The common 'angman will do has much for you!" retorted the other.

"What's that?"

"Hi said, the common 'angman 'd do has much."

"Oh! Well, hurry up!"

Jack Austin was now lifted, and carried to the room below, where he was deposited in the trap-door.

"That's the handle!" said the ex-convict pointing to a knob projecting from the wall.

"Pull that, and he drops into the sewer connection!"

"Get hout!" commanded Mac, feeling that he could restrain himself no longer.

"I'm off! Fifteen minits, remember. The gang's liable t' turn up any time now!"

With this startling statement, Wilson went out—locking the door, to prevent intrusion, he said, from without.

This upset Mac's plans, for he had calculated on scaling one of the adjoining fences, with Jack, leaving the trap open, and the ruffian in doubt as to what had become of them.

Now, he had a half-unconscious man, a heavy door, and the prospect of a gang of cut-throats entering at any moment, to deal with.

"Well, they'll be warmly received," muttered McVeigh, as he stooped, and lifted Jack from the trap.

The drink of water seemed to have revived the latter, but he was still weak, and by no means clear-headed.

"Oh, for a little liquor!" exclaimed Mac, seeing the condition of his partner.

"Pocket!" murmured Jack.

Scarcely deeming it worth while, Mac placed his hand on the other's breast, and, to his mingled delight and astonishment, felt the thin, flat, silver flask in its usual place.

The flask was full of the best French brandy, a draught of which seemed to put new life into Jack, who extended his hand, saying:

"That's one I owe you, old man."

In spite of the danger, Mac chuckled—his partner did not recognize him! This was not because of lack of light, for the former had found and lighted a railroad lantern.

Grasping the proffered hand, Mac solemnly rejoined:

"Faith, ye may have many a chance t' pay me afore we're out o' this din!"

This speech proved more potent than the brandy, acting on Jack like electricity.

"Mac!" he cried, springing up in astonishment.

"No liss!" was the calm response, in low tones.

"But, ther's no time t' explain," continued Mac. "Ye had only fifteen minits t' live, an' that lad'll be back—"

"Hush! Be jabbers, they're comin'!"

As Mac thus abruptly interrupted himself, the noise of a number of men approaching could be heard quite plainly. They were just leaving the saloon for the house.

For a moment Mac was puzzled. He didn't want to reveal his identity by fighting, but had decided that they must, when his eye fell upon two heavy iron screw-eyes on either side of the door.

"Where's the bar?" flashed the question through his mind, to be answered the next instant, as he saw it standing against the door-post.

Quietly slipping the bar into place, and putting out the light, Mac whispered:

"Get up-stairs—quick and quiet! There must be a window, and you can get into the next yard."

"Wait for me in front! I'm safe!"

Relying on the last statement, Austin slipped up-stairs, and as he disappeared from view the key was turned in the lock.

"What the deuce is the matter?" demanded one, seeing the door still shut.

Mac, meantime, had thrown himself on the floor, where he rolled and kicked like a madman.

"What's that? Who's inside?" demanded the same voice—evidently that of one in authority.

"Wait till we get in 'n' I'll tell ye," replied Wilson, pounding on the door, and calling on "Roser" to remove the bar.

"Cawn't do it, ye know! 'E's—'e's got me down—no, Hi got 'im!"

As he uttered the last word, Mac brought down his heel with a tremendous bang, and then springing up pulled the trap, which opened noiselessly, but flew back with a crash that shook the building.

Then Mac lifted the bar, the door was thrown back, and a dozen men rushed in.

"Hit's hall hover," panted the exhausted cockney, "but Hi wouldn't go through—"

"Hush!" interrupted Wilson.

"Lock that door!" ordered the leader, while another struck a light.

"Now what's the meanin' o' this?"

The question was addressed to Wilson, but.

The speaker was looking at Mac, who presented a sorry appearance, with face and hands covered with dust and dirt, and his clothing both torn and dirty, from his apparently frantic struggle.

"E got loose, ye see—" began Mac, but Wilson held up his hand warningly, while he whispered to the leader, who, when the former ceased, said:

"That's O. K.—as far as the noise goes, but it don't explain this."

He touched his cheek significantly, and shouted:

"Nail him, boys! He's under cover!"

Instantly Mac was grasped by a dozen hands, and borne to the floor.

In tumbling about on the floor, he had lost one of his mutton-chop whiskers!

CHAPTER XIX.

A STARTLING SHOT.

NOT for an instant did Mac lose his wits, and the first words he uttered as, bound hand and foot, he struggled to a sitting position, were:

"Well, this is a bloody fine go!"

"Come off!" growled the leader of the gang. "Ye might as well drop that; it's played out, and so 're you!"

"Hi should say so," returned Mac, "hand so would you, hif ye wor me."

"Keepin' it up, eh? What about them whiskers?" asked the leader, with a sarcastic laugh.

"Why, ye don't think Hi'm such a bloomin' if it has t' come 'ere t' be a mark for yer bloody p'lice hagents, Hi 'opes!" replied Mac, scornfully.

"Name a man on the other side that ye know," demanded the other after a moment's thought.

"Piper Smith!"

"Never heard of him! Where does he live?"

"Whitechapel Road—keeps a 'pub.'—is number 1400 A."

This prompt reply seemed to stagger the skeptical leader, and after another pause, he said:

"I'm goin' to test your story. If it's O. K., you won't be sorry for havin' got in here, but if it's crooked, you can bet ye will!"

"I'm goin' t' cable. What's this 'Smith's full name?"

"Peter—Peter the Piper, they calls 'im. But, Hi say! W'ot sort hof ba game d'ye call this? Hi does ba little job, hand Hi get tied up, hinstead hof gettin' the blunt."

Wilson whispered something to the leader, finishing aloud with:

"It's a fact, Billy. I saw the coin, and so did the rest."

"Billy" paused in the act of handing one of the gang a message for transmission to London—to which the reply would come, within an hour, that there was no such person as Peter Smith at the address given—and looking doubtfully at the speaker, ordered:

"Turn out his pockets!"

Two minutes after Mac's bonds were severed, and, (although showing no sign of it,) he was the most astonished man present.

The clothes bought at the costumer's were not new—that would never do—and almost the first thing taken from the detective's pocket was an empty envelope postmarked London!

That settled it. No one noticed that the postmark was over a year old, and names, of course, amount to nothing among criminals.

"What'll ye drink?" asked Billy.

"Hi think habout ba pint hof 'bitter' would be the proper thing," replied Mac, adding:

"Hand I say, Mister Wilson! Hif you'll 'and hover the coin, ye know, Hi'll stand treat."

Dick squirmed under this, and looked uneasy as he answered:

"I haven't enough—that is, I'll fix you up to-morrow."

Mac saw in this the opportunity he was wishing for to leave the place, and apparently in a thundering rage, exclaimed:

"No, you won't fix me hup t'-morrn'! You'll fix me hup t'-night—that's w'ot ye'll do, ine downy cove!"

"But I haven't got that much now," protested Wilson. "Wait until the banks open in the morning, and—"

A derisive laugh from the other interrupted him, and he looked appealingly at Billy, the leader, who said:

"Give him what you've got," and turning to the pretended cockney, continued:

"Ye can't get blood out o' stone. Take what he's got. I'll see that ye get the rest to-morrow. Satisfied?"

Without waiting for a reply, the speaker ordered some of the others to get drinks from

the saloon, and Mac saw him slip a piece of paper, with whispered instructions, to one of the men.

"It's the cable! Time to git!" decided Mac, and, as Billy turned toward them, snatched the roll of bills which Wilson was proffering.

"What! Not satisfied yet?" inquired the leader.

The messengers were unlocking and unbarring the door, there was no time for delay, and Mac started to leave, sullenly answering:

"Got t' be, Hi s'pose, but Hi'll take the rest hout hof 'is 'ide some day."

"Hold on! Where're you goin'?"

"Goin' hout!"

"Oh, no. We can't let ye go that way."

"Hi'd like t' see 'co's goin' for t' stop me!"

"Keep that bar there!" ordered the leader, and to Mac: "You sit down, and wait for yer beer!"

He was emphasizing the command by drawing a revolver, but found himself staring into the muzzle of Mac's "bulldog."

"Now you sit down!" ordered the latter.

A moment later one of the ruffians—who had been paralyzed by Mac's action—seized a bottle, but, as he was about to hurl it, a shot rung out and the man fell.

All turned instantly in the direction of the stairs, from which the shot came, and with a yell of terror, Wilson dropped on the floor.

Standing at the foot of the stairs, the deathly pallor of his face showing through streaks of blood, stood Quiet Jack!

It was but a momentary view—another shot rung out, the lantern was smashed, and the room was at once in darkness!

CHAPTER XX.

THE ESCAPE.

OF all in the room, no one, except Wilson, was more astonished to see Jack, than his partner, who had supposed him to be safe out of the house.

Unlike Wilson, however, Mac had no idea that there was anything supernatural about Jack's appearance on the scene.

With the light-destroying second shot, Mac fell to the floor, uttering the peculiar call of the Australian hunter—"Co-o-o-ey!" as he went down.

Then, on his hands and knees, he crawled toward the door, upsetting two of the gang, and thereby adding to the general confusion, on the way.

"Guard the door!"

"Strike a light!"

But, it was too late. Even as the leader uttered the second order, Mac's hand was on the bar, and the next instant the door flew back.

"After him!" yelled Billy, as a dark form shot through the doorway, and the whole gang dashed out in pursuit.

Mac had stepped aside on throwing open the door, hoping for just such a rush, but was perplexed by the fugitive.

"Jack couldn't have reached the door so quick," he reasoned, and in a low tone called:

"Jack, Jack!"

"All right!" came the reply, and the speaker struck a match as he came toward the door.

"Was it you gave that call?" he continued.

"Yes, but let's out of here!" and pushing Jack ahead through the doorway, Mac started for the lower of the flanking fences.

It was too late, however, for the gang were returning (having discovered that it was cowardly, terror-stricken Wilson they were pursuing), and the detectives would be shot down like rats before the high fence could be scaled.

Perceiving this, Mac abandoned the idea of escaping by way of the next yard.

"Stand here!" he said, dragging Jack under the trees, and then, as a new idea occurred to him:

"Up with ye, quick!"

In an instant Jack was astride one of the lower limbs, with his feet drawn up, to escape notice, while Mac was in a similar position in the other tree.

The gang came along, noisily and angrily discussing the recent events. Recrimination was rife, but on Wilson fell the brunt of the blame—Billy leading in the attack.

"You cursed cur, what'd ye run for?" he demanded, as they passed the trees, adding:

"Now, they're over the fences 'n' int' the street, while we've been hootin' you!"

"Here, you Jim!" he continued, in a savage tone, "stand at the door, 'n' shoot the first man that tries t' pass ye!"

The fellow addressed fell behind, and, when

the others had passed into the house, took up the position indicated—with his face toward the door.

There was scarcely any light in the yard, but Mac could distinguish the form of a man standing before the door leading into the saloon, whom he rightly surmised to be on guard.

Dropping lightly to the ground, he motioned Jack to do the same, and whispered:

"When you see that fellow at the door fall, come as if the Old Boy was after ye!"

Without waiting for a reply, Mac walked boldly toward the saloon entrance. The guard at the house had his back to the detective, and the soft earth gave back no sound to betray his presence.

Watching from under the trees, Jack saw him walk up to the guard, and the next instant the latter fell. Then, the watcher became a runner, and so quick a one, that he was at the saloon door, when Jim turned to look for the cause of the noise.

Quickly realizing what had happened, Jim gave the alarm. But, it was too late; Mac and his partner, were already lost in the crowded Bowery, having passed through the hallway adjoining the saloon.

Turning into the first side-street, the detectives entered a saloon, in the back room of which all traces of the "late disturbance" were removed, and while this was being done, Jack kept eying his companion.

As may be supposed, Mac was well aware of the scrutiny he was undergoing, and having great command over the facial muscles, kept changing the expression of his face—intending to finish with the "hod-carrier"—but before he had time to do so, Dick uttered a sigh of relief, and in his quiet way, remarked:

"If you would dye that hair, or wear a wig, you would deceive the devil!"

Then, Mac knew that his identity was fully discovered, and laughingly replied:

"Faith, it tuk ye a long time, Jack, me boy!"

"But," he continued, his tone and manner changing to terrible sternness, "that hair will never be changed, Jack—never till the man that turned it gray has a chance to look at it, as he goes to the rope!"

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW JACK WAS TRAPPED.

JACK had never seen his partner in this mood, nor had he ever before referred to, or in any way touched on the latter's prematurely gray hair, and now, before he could make any remark, Mac became himself again, saying:

"And, now, we'd better be off an' talk over things."

"All right, I'm ready," responded Austin.

Accordingly the partners left the saloon, and hailing a passing cab, Jack gave him the office address.

"We'll be able to discuss matters, and I can fix up, there, better than anywhere else," he explained, as he jumped into the cab.

"Faith, ye'r gettin' high-toned, avick," remarked Mac, "phot's the matther wud the caars?"

"I want to think—and I don't want to be seen," was the quick reply, and not another word was spoken until the office was reached.

Throwing himself on the lounge, Jack said:

"Mac, tell me what has happened—what brought you to that den—while I take a few minutes' rest, for I've plenty to do."

Mac complied, and, for a few minutes after he had finished his story, Jack remained silent. Then, slowly, and weighing his words, he said:

"I don't think either of us saw the girl, or woman, you saw here!"

"On leaving you," he continued, "I went to the Barret mansion, asked for Miss Eunice Barret, and was invited into the reception-room."

"Shortly after the lady appeared, and, although the room was not very bright, I saw that her hair was bleached—her eyes didn't match it."

"Was it so with yours?"

"No," replied Mac.

"Well, no matter—it's too late, for that part of it, now."

"When Miss Barret entered, I introduced myself as coming from Mr. McVeigh—keeping a sharp lookout for eavesdroppers."

"She smiled sweetly, made some remark about hod-carrying, and asked what I wanted."

"I replied that it would be dangerous for you to appear there, yourself, and that I had a list of questions to ask her—producing the paper, (like an idiot,) as I said so."

"Just then, the clock struck, and she rung for a servant, saying that every two hours she

had to take some mixture of wine—by orders of her physician.

"I fell right into the trap, for when the servant came, and, after hearing her give explicit directions to bring two particular bottles, she said: 'Keep me in countenance, and drink a glass of claret, while we talk,' I willingly agreed.

"Well, the wine was brought. It was drugged, and I woke up in that den in the Bowery—but I was conscious before it was known, and—Mac!"

"Well?"

"The real Robert Barret's in New York!"

"Eh? What?"

"The real Robert Barret is in New York," repeated Jack, adding:

"Your Miss Barret's suspicions are well founded, and that's one reason why I doubted if I had seen her.

"Now, we've got to divide up—how shall we manage?"

Mac made no reply for several minutes, and, before he did, muttered:

"There's three—maybe four, uv us:—Jack, the doctor, the b'y, an' meself," and aloud:

"There is he, Jack—Barret I mean?"

"In some private lunatic asylum—I couldn't catch the name—and the orders are to kill him, or drive him crazy!"

"Phew! Well, how much dividin' is the'r t' do?"

"If this wan we saw is not th' genuine article—where is she?"

"That's conundrum number wan.

"Thin ther's Barret t' be found—that's number two; an' the pretinder t' be caught an' exposed—that's number three.

"Now, the doctor 'n' me, 'n' the b'y, kin take care o' any two—which wan d'ye want?"

"I look for Barret—that will include the exposure of that she-devil."

"All right, Jack; take your own choice.

"I believe—in fact, I'm sure, ye'r' right about the gurrul, an' anyhow, I'm in it for spite, now."

"Very good. Now, if you don't mind, I'll take possession of the office for to-night.

"You can bet on one thing, Mac, you'll hear from me regularly, hereafter. Neither man or devil—or woman—will fool me, again."

There was a queer rivalry existing between the partners regarding their "make up," and taking the hint, Mac arose, saying:

"Good enough, Jack! We'll start our part t'-mornin', an' I'll look t' hear from ye be night. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXII.

SAM SHARP, MESSENGER-BOY.

WHEN Mac arrived at the office next morning—once more the "hod-carrier,"—he found the messenger-boy in charge.

"Did ye have any callers?" asked Mac.

"Nix—I mean—no, sir."

The detective had already seen that the boy was bright, and now determined to intrust him with some work that a boy could do better than a man.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Sam Sharp, sir."

"Well, Sam, I'm goin' t' see how sharp ye are. Now, ye know, where—Madison avenue is?"

"Barret's house? Yes, sir!"

"Humph! Well, ther's a b'y there that I want t' see. All I know about him is, his name is Joe, and Miss Eunice Barret's the key t' unlock him with."

"All right, sir! When d'ye want him?"

"How d'ye know ye kin get him at all?" asked Mac, surprised at the confident tone of the boy.

"I'll have him here whenever ye say, sir," replied the boy, adding:

"We've got wires in that house, so I won't have no trouble about gittin' in, Mr. McVeigh."

"Eh?"

"Well, I know ye, Mr. McVeigh—we generally know who's who."

Mac could not repress a smile—the boy's shrewdness amused as well as interested him.

"Well, then, I suppose ye know what kind uv business ye'r' goin' on?" he asked, confidently expecting a reply in the negative, for not even the lordly janitor knew the business of the late firm of "McVeigh & Austin."

"Oh, yes. Some kind of detective work!" promptly replied the boy.

"Well, may the devil admire me!" exclaimed Mac. "An' how—what d'ye know uv that?"

"Nothin' much, sir, only I thought I'd learn what I could while I was on the force, and that's one of the things I learnt."

"Who else knows it?" Mac asked curiously.

"Just me—that's all."

"Humph! Ye feel purty sure about gettin' this b'y, Joe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, thin, go ahead! But, look here, he mustn't be seen comin' in here. Kin ye manage that?"

"On, yes—certainly! Come in on—street—I'll give him me badge—say he's after wires—come over the roof 'n' down here. I kin let him in, when he raps on the roof door."

Mac expected to learn a great deal from "Joe" when he got hold of him, but he also expected a great deal of difficulty in doing that, and now this boy appeared able to take the burden off his shoulders.

"Very well," he said; "have him here in two hours. Ye kin go now."

Snatching up his cap, Sam started off on his mission, looking nearly as confident as he felt, and shortly after Mac took his departure.

The latter was bound for Doctor Lewis's, and, in accordance with his resolution to do nothing until Robert Barret was restored to liberty, the doctor was at home—reading, and impatiently awaiting a message from the "hod-carrier."

"Ah! Good-morning, Mr. McVeigh!" exclaimed Lewis. "I'm heartily glad to see you, and, to be frank with you, it's not for yourself, but because you may have something for me to do."

"I have, sir," replied Mac. "Misther Barret is somewhere in New York—in some private asylum—and I'll give you a week t' find him."

"Never mind how I know it," continued Mac; "he's here, an' he's got t' be found!"

"If you can get a hint as t' where he is, let me know, an' we'll consult."

Mac was afraid to tell the doctor that he believed that Eunice Barret had been led away from home, if not kidnapped, and so said nothing about her.

"Deeply obliged to you for giving me something to do," rejoined Lewis. "I'll start to work at once, and report within a week."

"Ye'll let me know, ez soon ez ye find him?"

"I will, and I'm going now."

Doctor Lewis accompanied Mac as far as the sidewalk, where they parted—one going up, and the other down-town.

On returning to his office, Mac found his messenger-boy, and a bright-looking, dark-eyed, dark-complexioned boy of about fourteen, awaiting him.

"This is Joe," said Sam.

"Oho! Well, Joe, when did ye see Miss Eunice?"

"Not in two days."

"Eh? Are ye sure? Who's the lady that looks like her?"

"Sure? Of course I'm sure! That's Miss Emily you saw yesterday."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIVE AT WORK.

AS we know, Mac was not unprepared to learn that Eunice Barret was being personated by somebody not friendly to her interests, but it was the boy's detection of his identity that was the most startling.

"How did ye get along?" he asked, turning to Sam.

"Just as I said I would, sir. Went in t' test our box—met the 'kid,' 'n' told ye wanted t' see him. He waited for me two blocks away, an' came through, over the roofs from—street here—I let him in."

Now, turning sharply on Joe, Mac asked:

"How d'ye know whether or not I called on Miss Barret yesterday?"

"Heard Miss Emily and Mr. Fulton talkin' about it," replied the boy, adding:

"She said as you got away they might as well jump the town, but he only laughed, and said he guessed they could take care of one man."

"And Miss Barret—where is she?"

"Went out with the new coachman, day before yesterday, and didn't come back. Report in the house is, that she's gone to join her mother, who got a telegram t' come t' Mr. Robert the day before—but she ain't done anything of the sort."

"How do you know?"

"Because, just before she went out, she told me you were comin', an' t' look out for ye and tell you to wait outside—but ye didn't come."

"Good reasoning," mentally commented Mac, and aloud:

"Then you think Miss Barret's been carried off—kidnapped?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Fulton came back 'bout three in the afternoon, lookin' tickled t' death, 'n' said

t' Miss Emily: 'Well, she's safe, an' I'm sure meant Miss Eunice.'

"I'm goin' after him, next time he goes out at night."

"That coachman goes into a place—a saloon, on Third avenue," put in the messenger-boy, adding:

"I often see him 'full.'"

"What is his name, and what is he like?" asked the detective.

Joe gave him a minute description of the new coachman, whose name was Ward, and dispatching Sam with a letter informing Austin that Fulton had returned, Mac dismissed his youthful ally with a warning against exciting the suspicions of the enemy.

"So Fulton's back," mused Mac, while awaiting the return of Sam.

"This trip out of town was only a blind to cover the abduction of the girl. Having just come from her, he won't be apt to visit her for a day or two, anyhow, so I'll devote myself to the coachman."

"That messenger-boy is well named—in fact they're both sharp, and I'll make use of them."

"Sam can watch Fulton outside, and Joe can watch him and the others inside. I wish I had thought of telling him to look out for addresses and post-marks on letters."

The messenger-boy now entered, and Mac instructed him to take advantage of the first opportunity to tell Joe to watch the letters, and notify him (Mac) the moment Wilson returned.

"And ye needn't come back here," he continued, watching the gloom gather on the boy's face, followed by an immediate brightening up, as Mac added:

"Until night."

"Just keep yer eye open, an' don't let Misther George Fulton go out o' the city, without ye know where he's goin', an' see that ye don't let him know what ye'r' about, or ye'll never make a detective—for it's likely ye'll die young, if ye do."

"I'll be careful, sir," quietly replied Sam.

"That's number four unleashed—now to let loose the immortal hod-carrier!" soliloquized Mac (smiling at the conceit) as the messenger-boy started on his mission.

An hour later a spruce-looking old fellow, whose countenance, clothing and carriage said "coachman" as plainly as if the word were stamped upon him, entered a Third avenue saloon.

He had had a quarrel with his "boss," he confidentially informed the barkeeper, and had come into the city to look for work. He had a little money saved, and was in no great hurry, but didn't like to be idle. Did the bookkeeper know any coachmen?

"Yes, several—one particularly, 'a nice fellow named Ward, liable to come in at any minute.'"

"Workin'?" Oh, yes, workin' for some big gun on Madison avenya—don't know who; he's pretty close-mouthed."

"We'll try how far whisky will open it," mentally commented the listener, who, as the reader doubtless suspects, was the "immortal hod-carrier."

Shortly after this conversation, and while the barkeeper was still singing his praises, Mr. Ward entered, looking very angry about something.

"Perhaps he's had a row with his 'boss,'" thought Mac—or Mr. Mulligan, as, at a sign from the gentleman behind the counter, he came forward to be introduced to Mr. Ward.

It was a wild thought—a stray shot, but it struck the bull's-eye of the target of truth!

Mr. Ward had been discharged, or as he phrased it "fired bodily," and he was furious over it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT THE COACHMAN KNEW.

IT is the man with a grievance who can best appreciate an attentive, sympathizing listener, and Mr. Mulligan proving just such a man, he and Mr. Ward became quite friendly—also quite drunk, later on.

"Ah, sir, ye should be like me—have a grip on him," observed Mr. Mulligan, when the other had finished his story, for the tenth time.

"You've been treated like a scoundrell! My old 'boss' wouldn't dare treat me that way," he continued.

"What d'ye mean?" asked Ward, looking at the speaker in surprise.

"Just what I say; but there's no use talkin' t' you young men; they know it all."

"Now, I've had more than one boss, but I could always go back or make some o' them keep me, when I wanted to—and how did I do it? Just by gettin' hold o' some little secret o' the boss's."

"Now, ye see, if *you* had a little screw t' turn on Mr. Fulton, ye could bring him down a peg."

Mr. Ward shook his head with drunken gravity.

"He's too careful; don't give no chance t' get a grip on him," he said, with such sincere regret that Mac was puzzled and disappointed.

"How about women, Mr. Ward—is he married?"

Mr. Ward started, and exclaimed:

"By gum, that *was* funny! I wonder if there was anythin' in it?"

"That's right!" encouraged Mac. "If ye can fix up a nice little story: I'll show ye how t' bring him round."

"Oh, there ain't no fixin' about it," returned Ward, "and I don't know what it's worth, but here it is:

"The day before he went away, the boss told me that on a certain day one o' the ladies—Miss Barret, would want t' drive t' Brooklyn, and that as soon as she went in, I was t' drive away."

"That's about all of it, except that it must be queer business to bring a lady like Miss Barret t' such a shanty. It looked like a haunted house."

Mac listened in amazement, for he had felt certain that Eunice was in some quiet country place, and could scarcely conceal his eagerness, as he asked:

"Remember where the house was? I'll have to be able to give him the exact points, ye know."

This looked plausible, and Mr. Ward did not hesitate about giving the much desired information.

"It's in — street, a half-mile, or more, from Fulton Ferry. A tumble-down frame house, which, as I said before, looks as if it was ha'nted. I've got the number of a house near it, and that'll be close enough to fetch him."

A search in a greasy note-book revealed the number, and then Mr. Mulligan departed—"to bring Mr. Fulton down a peg."

As he passed out of the saloon, Mac saw Sam the messenger-boy peeping in at the window, and guessing the latter had some information for him, revealed himself.

"Joe said t' tell ye that Herman's back, and that him 'n' Fulton's been growlin' at each other all the afternoon," was Sam's story.

"Humph! Seems as if all the birds'd be back t' the roost at the same time," commented Mac.

"Anythin' else, Sam?"

"No, sir."

It was nearly night, now, (for Mr. Ward had a very hard head, and it had required a great deal of oil to loosen his tongue,) and after a moment's deliberation, Mac decided to take Sam to Brooklyn.

The house was quickly located—there could be no mistaking it, and its appearance fully justified the coachman's words.

A few words uttered in a neighboring saloon, brought forth the information that in years no one had been known to enter or leave the "haunted house," although it was certainly occupied, for a grocer's boy came two or three times a week with provisions, but he never got any further than the basement door, and could tell nothing except that his basket was received by a sour-looking, aged female.

That such a house, in so densely populated a neighborhood, should remain an unsolved mystery, seemed queer, but so it was—and so it remains to this day!

At the moment of writing, the front still remains, as it has been for years, unpainted; the wooden stoop a wreck; the iron basement gate missing; the windows and shutters smashed in a dozen places—but it is tenanted, and several lines of cars pass the once white-painted door, to which is still fastened a rusty, old-fashioned knocker.

Sam now came in very handy. His uniform secured him admission pretty near everywhere—from the church to the card-table in the gambling den, and Mac thought he would try its effect on the "haunted house."

Addressing an envelope to "Miss Eunice Barret, No. —, — street, Brooklyn," he handed it to Sam, saying:

"She's there, and you know it, because Mr. George Fulton sent you, and that letter is to be delivered to her personally."

"You, probably, won't be let in, and, likely as not, won't see her, but, if she should get to the door, cover whoever comes with her, with this revolver—and shout!"

"Yes, sir—I understand."

Following close behind the messenger-boy, Mac saw him go down the basement steps, and heard him hammer on the door.

Then came the angry tones of a woman, de-

manding what was wanted, the bold reply of the boy, and again the woman's voice in the one word:

"Wait!"

The listener's heart leaped, as he crouched beside the stoop, and prepared to clear the railing into the basement.

Seconds seemed like minutes, and minutes like hours, until the door opened again, and then came the summons:

"Jump! Quick!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CLOSING OF THE NET.

THE instant Sam shouted, Mac was behind in the basement. In front of him stood the sour-looking female, and behind her Eunice Barret—both looking somewhat astonished!

"What does this mean?" indignantly demanded the former.

"It means, ma'am, that Miss Barret's wanted in Noo York," replied Mac.

"But, this boy said he had a letter for her!"

"Yis, ma'am; thrue for ye, an' that's phot's in the letter."

"How do *you* know?"

"Oh, faith, ma'am, I kem along wud it, but the people 'round here arr so bad-minded, the' said I'd never have a chance t' deliver me message, so, I had t' get this b'y, d'ye see."

"That's it, is it?"

"Well, miss, I suppose you must go—but remember your promise."

"I shall not forget, madam," quietly replied Eunice, as she turned away.

Fearing he might lose her, and a little curious to obtain a glimpse of the interior of this strange house, Mac asked:

"Shall we wait here, ma'am?"

"Unless you prefer the sidewalk," was the prompt and chilling reply.

"I guess we'll stay here," returned Mac, dryly.

"As you please."

In a few minutes, Eunice returned to the basement, and with a quiet "good-night," passed out into the street, unconscious—as it proved—that she had left what was meant to be at least a temporary prison.

But that she had recognized the "hod-carrier's" voice, Eunice informed him that she would not have left the haunted house, and was amazed on learning, as the three rode to New York, that it was through Fulton's machinations she had gone there.

"Why, I received a telegram, apparently from mother," she explained, "telling me to meet her and Uncle Robert at that house, and I was not allowed up-stairs until I had promised not to speak of anything I might see."

"And ye saw—?"

"Many things," quietly replied Eunice, and that killed Mac's curiosity.

"Will ye go t' a fri'nd's or some hotel?" he asked, after a short silence, adding:

"Uv coorse, it won't do t' alarm him, yit, but sthilt that gintleman's comin' fast t' the ind uv his rope, an' it won't do t' thruth him too much."

"I hardly know where to go," replied Eunice. "I suppose it's better to go to some hotel. Friends will talk."

"Ye'r right, ma'am!" commended the "hod-carrier," and then, another idea occurring to him:

"I live with a nice, quiet old lady, an' if ye like the id'a, ye could sthoph there for a day or two."

Eunice eagerly adopted this plan, and as the carriage stopped, Mac said:

"Ye'll just be me niece, and this n'y is yer brother, Miss Barret. He'll stay and look for ye, for this man is liable to do anythin'."

Eunice made no objection to this, and having placed her in the care of his landlady and Sam, Mac hurried to ascertain if there was word from Austin or Lewis.

He found a note from each—the first containing just three words.

"Jack—back—to-morrow."

Doctor Lewis's message also was brief:

"Come at once—Blank's Hotel, West Farms."

"He's found him!" exclaimed Mac, and instantly started for the hotel, where he met the doctor.

"Well, what luck?" asked the "hod-carrier," or rather coachman, for he had not stopped to change his disguise.

"Eh? What do you mean, sir?" stiffly demanded Lewis.

"Faith, I dunno, sir, mebbe—"

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed the young physician, adding:

"I was beginning to fear that my message had miscarried."

"Come, let us go to a room where we can talk. We must stay here to-night, anyhow."

The doctor was in a highly excited state, and this confirmed Mac's impression. Nor was he mistaken.

"I've discovered him," averred Lewis, almost as soon as they were alone.

"As you may know," he continued, "I am writing a treatise—a book—on insanity—as *all experts do*."

(There was scorn and self-reproach to no small extent in the last words.)

"Well, the fact that this *wonderful* book is on the road to publication, is well known, and" (modestly,) "I am beginning to be known myself."

"This saved much trouble—that you, or any other stranger, would have encountered, and besides, old Doctor Goodheart, who had charge of Mr. Barret first, gave me a valuable hint—telling me that, instead of going toward the city, the carriage was driven further out."

"Well, to cut it short, I found him in Salter's Sanitarium—a place I've long suspected of not being what it should, above all other places, be—honest."

"I was looking for 'peculiar cases, you see, and, not having seen the original commitment, Mr. Salter was unaware of the fact that I was one of the *experts* that caused it to be issued; so Mr. Barret was exhibited as a most peculiar case."

"How does he look?"

"Well, if it were not for meeting a big fellow of the name of Kelly—Andy Kelly, he calls himself—I would say he was insane, but this fellow was formerly an attendant in the Sanitarium, and assures me that Mr. Barret is sane as you or I—or was until a few days ago."

At that moment there was a knock on the door, and Mr. "Andy Kelly" entered.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DOG EAT DOG.

THE evening after the finding of Eunice and Robert Barret.

Mr. Fulton and Herman, the valet, are seated in the room of the former in the Barret mansion.

All news travels fast, and the valet is saying: "It looks to me as if the last card was played—and lost."

"Eunice Barret is free, and, of course, with that detective. Robert Barret has in some mysterious way got out of that asylum, and *our dummy has been stolen!*"

"I can't see that there is anything to be done, except get all we can and skip."

"You've got Miss Emily and can raise a couple hundred thousand, so, I can't see why both of you shouldn't be glad to quit. You were only a clerk—though a distant relative—and she a variety actress who resembled Miss Barret—and both of you have had more out of this than me."

"What do you say? Shall we skip?" There was something threateningly suggestive of "State's evidence" in Herman's tone, but, making no sign of having noticed it, Fulton replied:

"I hardly know what to do. It's odd, that they've made no move yet. How long d'ye think we've got, Herman?"

"It's hard to say. They might be too frightened to stir for a day or two, and then, again, they are liable to come any time."

"Well, I can't do anything to-night, toward raising funds, so we'll have to wait until to-morrow morning."

"And, now, I must have time to think, Herman. Come back in an hour."

"All right, sir. I'll be back in an hour," replied the valet, with a triumphant smile.

Alone, Fulton arose and began pacing the floor, talking to himself—a bad habit, especially so, it proved for him.

"I've got nearly a quarter of a million in that package in my trunk. It's lucky I decided to make it up before leaving the office."

"With that much, I'll be pretty easy in Belgium—and— Yes, I'll take Emily; she'll be useful, but that scoundrel Herman is becoming dangerous. We'll start to-night, but *he'll stay here*."

Then, having decided on the course to be pursued, Mr. Fulton sat down and lighted a cigar, while Herman, whose ear had been glued to the keyhole, quietly walked up-stairs muttering:

"A quarter of a million, and I stay here! I'm afraid not, Mr. Fulton, I'm afraid not! The chances are that the fair Emily will go with me."

—not you. *You will stay where I leave you when I say good-night!*"

"A quarter of a million! He would have played me false, and takes me now only because I'm useful—so!"

The speaker is Emily Morgan—the girl who was brought to the Barret mansion to take the place of Eunice, should it become necessary.

Herman has just left her, after repeating Fulton's words, and urging her to fly with him.

"Fulton's the man they'll follow furthest," he argued, "and you won't be safe if you go with him."

"Suggest my being present when you return to him," she had replied, "and I'll decide after we leave him."

That settled her fate, for as the valet, having returned to his room, searched through a private cupboard, he muttered:

"Well, it's your own fault, mademoiselle, your own fault. I would have taken you, but, now, you, too, must stay behind!"

When the hour had elapsed, Herman returned to Mr. Fulton's room.

"Does Miss Emily accompany us?" asked the valet, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Yes; why?"

"Would it not be well to acquaint her with—"

"Yes, you are right. She will have to get ready, for I have decided to leave to-morrow," interrupted Fulton, adding:

"Ask her to come here—and, Herman! Bring a bottle of wine, and glasses."

The change in Herman's tone, as he said: "Yes, sir," and the smile that accompanied the words, should have warned Fulton, but he was too excited—too intent on his own murderous plot—to notice anything.

In a few minutes, Emily entered, followed by the valet, bearing a tray with a bottle and three glasses—the latter having just a suspicion of white powder on the bottom.

"Fill the glasses!" ordered Fulton.

This was done, and the tray placed on the small table, around which all three now seated themselves.

After a minute's preliminary talk, Fulton picked up one of the glasses—and dropped it on the floor!

With a curse at his own awkwardness, he arose, saying:

"Never mind! I've got a glass here, somewhere."

And taking a glass from a shelf, Mr. Fulton quickly poured out some wine—thus preventing Herman from seeing that there was a suspicion of white powder in this glass, also!

Mr. Fulton's glass was different, and therefore easily distinguished from the others.

Although in such a hurry to fill it, Mr. Fulton placed the glass on the tray, and began talking of the intended flight.

Herman listened thoughtfully, *playing with the glasses* until he had Mr. Fulton's glass between his fingers.

Then there came a break in the talk, and the master-spirit said:

"Well, let's drink to the voyage!"

Herman could scarcely repress his laughter. He was just about to say the same thing.

"Success—altogether!" returned the valet.

They were ominous words they were altogether—before their judge within a minute.

"Scoundrel!"

"Traitor!"

"Villains!"

One word from each—Fulton, Herman, Emily—and there were three corpses around the center-table!

Ten minutes after, a party composed of McVeigh, Austin, Robert Barret, Doctor Lewis and the big keeper, Andy Kelly, entered the house—but human justice had been forestalled.

The "hod-carrier" was strangely affected, excited, on seeing Herman, and, on leaving, remarked:

"I can change my hair, now, Jack; the man is dead!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

On the same night that Eunice was brought back from the "haunted house" in Brooklyn, Robert Barret was released, or rather rescued, from "Salter's Sanitarium."

There was nothing mysterious about the affair, nor could the rescue have been effected but for the assistance of the ex-keeper, Andy, and the isolated situation of the sanitarium.

When Andy met Lewis and Mac at the hotel,

he had no intention of lending physical assistance against his former employer, but the doctor and detective used their persuasive powers to such good effect that, within ten minutes, the big fellow said:

"All right! I'm with ye, but, if I hurt anybody, you'll have to stand by me."

"Don't worry about that," assured Lewis.

"We'll take care of you."

"Hurry up—it's gettin' late," warned Mac, and the party started.

The carriage, under double fare, quickly reached the sanitarium, where Andy announced his presence by a tremendous yanking of the bell-handle.

"Now, you stand back," said the big fellow.

"If the doctor comes, I'll call ye, but, if any one else comes, I'll send for him."

In a few minutes an attendant came to the door, and on seeing the ex-keeper admitted him, with the remark:

"Lucky thing you come, Andy. The old man will be glad to see you."

"Tell him to come here right away. I've got somethin' of importance—great importance for him to attend to."

"All right, Andy; but he's got a case in the bathroom!"

"Who is it?"

"Don't know his name, but you used to attend him. I—hold on! It's Simple, that's it!"

"Tell him to come here, quick!"

Andy fairly thundered the words, and the attendant, thinking the carriage contained the "important case," hurried away to Doctor Salter, who, with a half-dozen of his tools, was preparing to give Robert Barret a bath!

The ex-keeper's summons, brought the "doctor" to the office, without delay.

"Come on!" yelled Andy, grasping Salter, and as the others entered:

"One of ye take care o' this scoundrel."

"They're goin' to torture our man!"

"I'll take care o' him. You go ahead!" Mac ordered, peremptorily.

Five minutes after, Robert Barret and his rescuers were speeding toward the city. Mac's last words to Salter being:

"I'll be back in the mornin' wud a warrant for ye, ye Satan's commissary!"

Late as it was, the party drove direct to Mac's office, where a surprise was awaiting them in the shape of Quiet Jack, and a man sleeping on the lounge.

"There's your double, Mr. Barret," said Jack, pointing to the sleeper.

"My double?"

"His double?"

"Yes, Mr. Barret's double," replied Jack, adding:

"I stole him from Herman in the Jersey City Depot. He was taken from Salter's den the night Mr. Barret was brought there and, under Herman's tutelage, has been playing Mr. B. ever since."

"He's a harmless lunatic, very much afraid of this fellow, Herman, and was only too glad to run away with me."

"Faith, between yerself an' that gurrul, Eunice, ye've robbed the docthor an' meself uv all the glory!" exclaimed Mac, looking admiringly at his partner.

"By no means. You gentlemen obtained my liberty as well as my niece's," protested Mr. Barret.

"It's Peter Simple," interrupted Andy, who had been looking at the man on the lounge.

"And Eunice, what have you done with her?" asked Mr. Barret.

"She's wud me boordin' missus," answered Mac, adding:

"It's purty late, but I think, if Docthor Lewis wud go afther her, she'd be home to-night."

The "hod-carrier" said this with a sly look that seemed very embarrassing to the doctor, but Barret relieved him, saying:

"No, no! The doctor and I will go to some hotel for to-night, and Eunice had better remain where she is."

"Och, she's safe enough; on'y I thought meb-be the docthor—"

"Come, come!" laughed Mr. Barret. "Don't cause any more blushing."

"I'll stay here to-night and take care of Peter Simple," volunteered Quiet Jack, changing the conversation.

"And you had better come with us," said Barret, addressing the ex-keeper, to whom he had taken a great fancy.

There was a great sensation in the papers next morning regarding the triple suicide in the Barret mansion—for, except Mac and Jack, and

their immediate assistants, no one had any knowledge of the relationship formerly existing between Fulton, Herman, and Emily, but those that knew, (after the "hod-carrier" found the quarter million in the arch-fiend's trunk,) had a different idea to that expressed by the verdict of the coroner's jury.

The three principals in the conspiracy being dead, Robert Barret did not care to create a sensation, so the opinion of himself and his friends was not expressed.

Doctor Lewis, with the full approval of his former patient, was rewarded a short time ago, for his zealous search for that gentleman, by Eunice's hand and heart.

Andy was rewarded for his kindness to Robert Barret, by being installed as a kind of companion—or guard—to that gentleman.

The boys, Sam and Joe, received their reward in the shape of employment, the former going at a good salary to McVeigh & Austin, and the latter to Doctor Lewis.

Mac and Quiet Jack, although well paid in advance by Eunice, were amply compensated by Robert Barret, and the firm of McVeigh & Austin is again in existence.

"Doctor Salter's Sanitarium" is no more. The doctor, not caring to await Mac's promised visit with the warrant, vanished; but, as Satan's Commissary, may be at Satan's work elsewhere—who knows?

THE END.

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